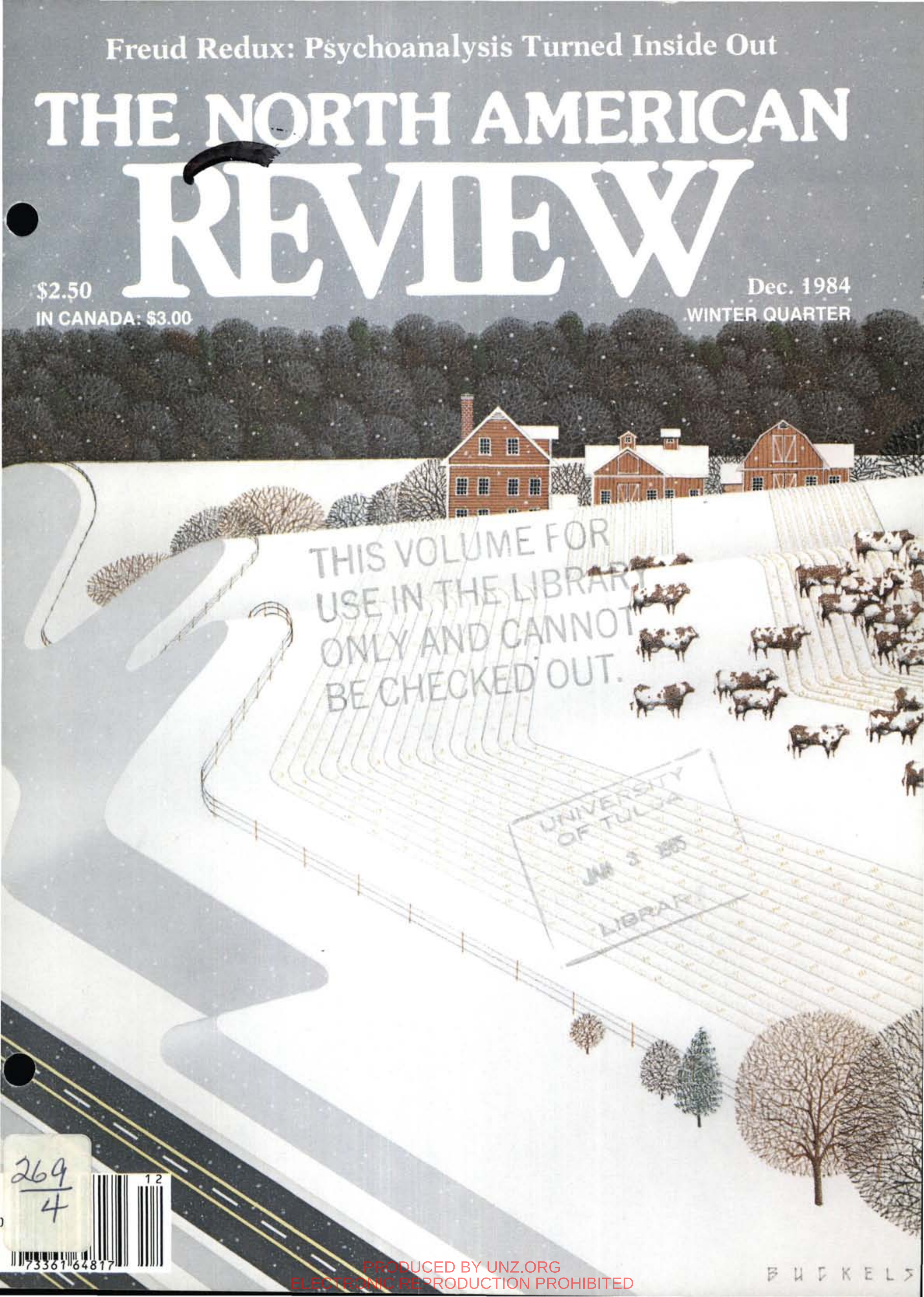
Freud Redux: Psychoanalysis Turned Inside Out

THE NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW

$2.50
IN CANADA: $3.00

Dec. 1984
WINTER QUARTER

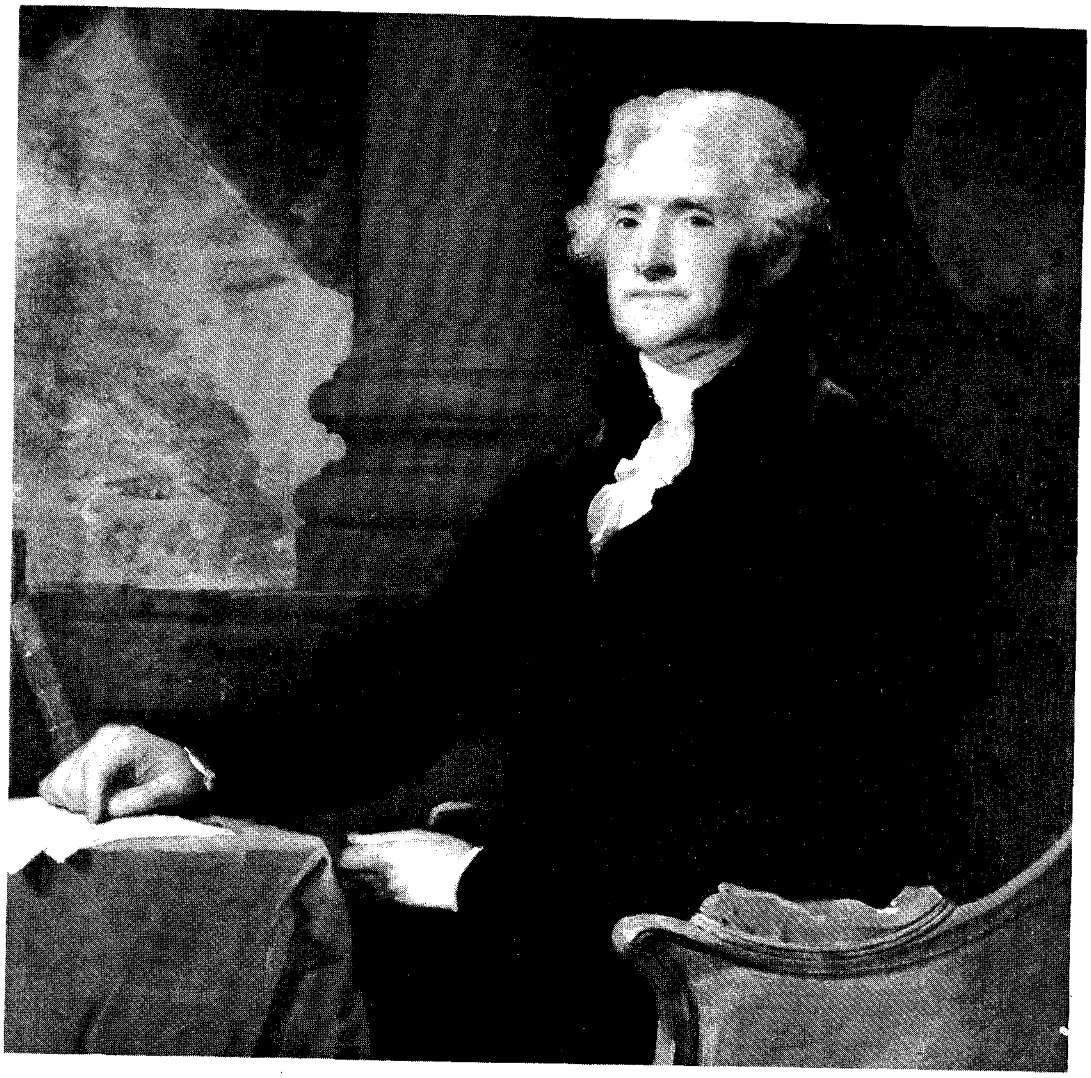


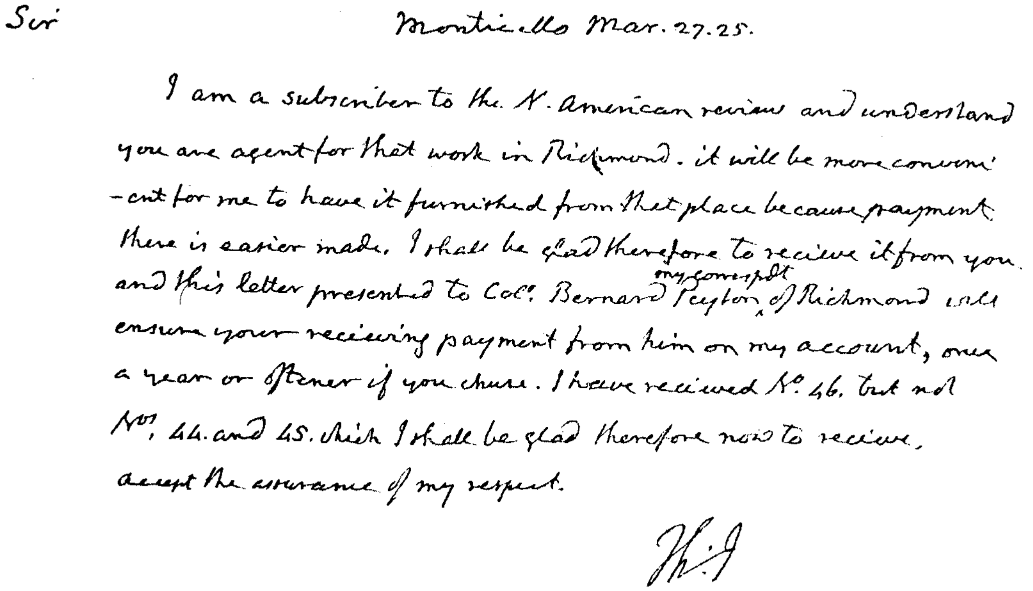
THIS VOLUME FOR USE IN THE LIBRARY ONLY AND CANNOT BE CHECKED OUT.

UNIVERSITY OF TULSA
JAN 3 1985
LIBRARY

269
4

73361 64817 12





Sir Monticello Mar. 27. 25.

I am a subscriber to the N. American review and understand you are agent for that work in Richmond. it will be more convenient for me to have it furnished from that place because payment there is easier made. I shall be glad therefore to recieve it from you and this letter presented to Colo. Bernard Peyton my correspdt of Richmond will ensure your recieving payment from him on my account, once a year or oftener if you chuse. I have recieved No. 46. but not Nos. 44. and 45. which I shall be glad therefore now to recieve. accept the assurance of my respect.

Th:J

Since 1815, no magazine in America has had a readership more distinguished or a literary history more rich than THE NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW. Now available at newsstands, as well as by subscription.

'FUNNY, BEAUTIFUL, AND IMPORTANT' – CAROL BERGE

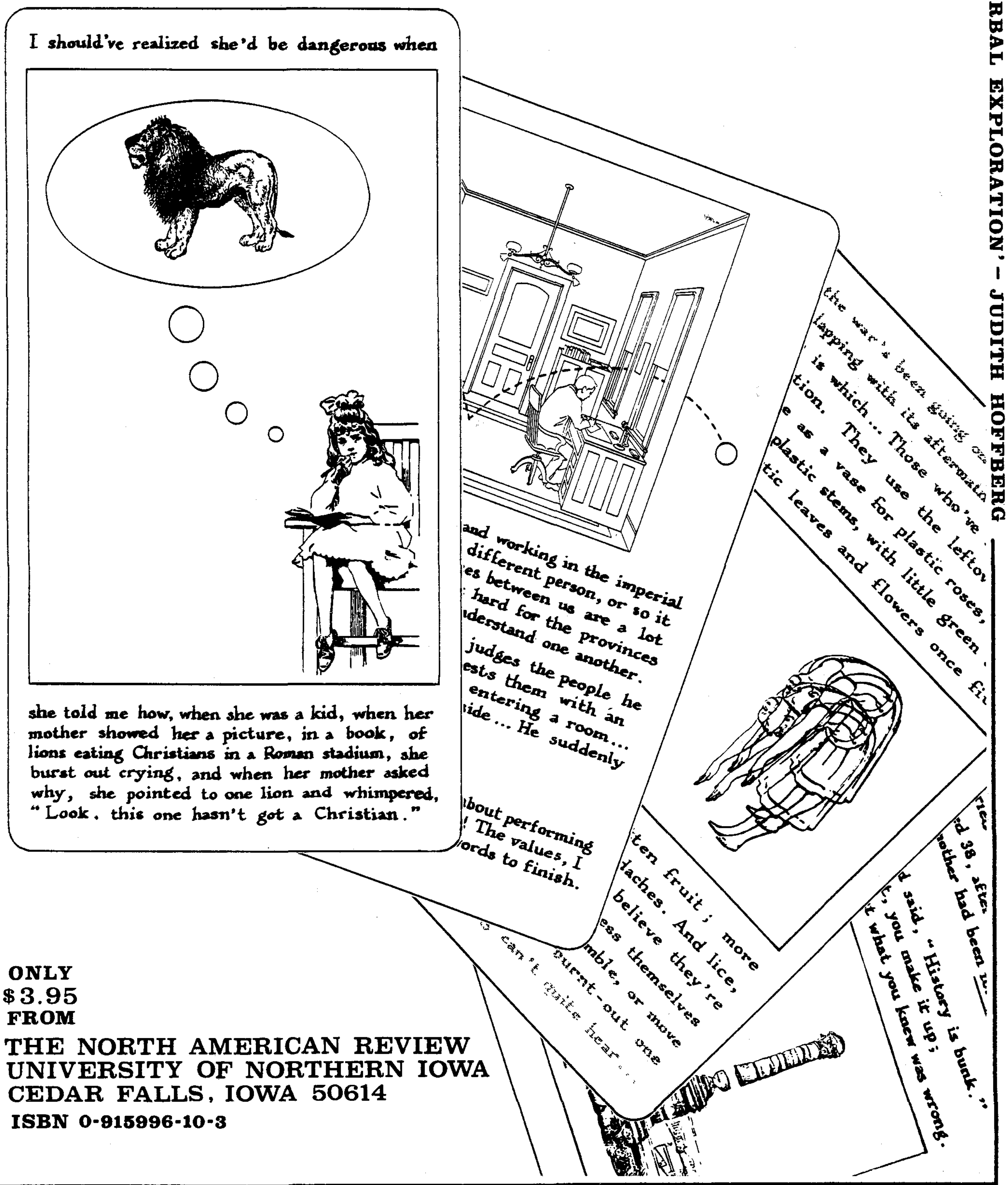
'A KASPER A DAY KEEPS THE MOODLES AWAY' – CHRISTOPH MIDDLETON

'A JOYFUL VISUAL-VERBAL EXPLORATION' – JUDITH HOFFBERG

Illustrated Short Prose
An engaging and engaged
picture book
of anecdotes, essays & parodies

ALL COTTON BRIEFS

BY M. KASPER



I should've realized she'd be dangerous when

she told me how, when she was a kid, when her mother showed her a picture, in a book, of lions eating Christians in a Roman stadium, she burst out crying, and when her mother asked why, she pointed to one lion and whimpered, "Look, this one hasn't got a Christian."

and working in the imperial
different person, or so it
es between us are a lot
hard for the provinces
derstand one another.
judges the people he
ests them with an
entering a room...
ide ... He suddenly

bout performing
! The values, I
ords to finish.

the war's been going o
lapping with its aftermath
is which ... Those who've
tion. They use the lefto
e as a vase for plastic roses,
plastic stems, with little green
tic leaves and flowers once fi

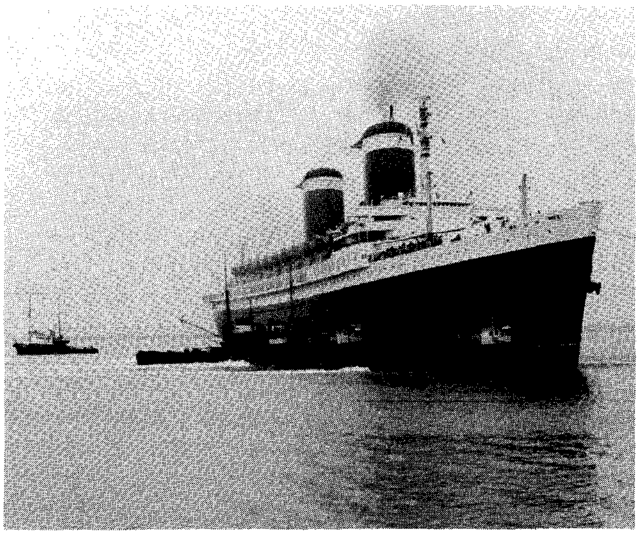
ten fruit; more
laches. And lice,
believe they're
ess themselves
mble, or move
burnt-out one
can't quite hear...

d 38, afte
other had been w
d said, "History is bunk."
t, you make it up;
t what you knew was wrong.

ONLY
$3.95
FROM
THE NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW
UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN IOWA
CEDAR FALLS, IOWA 50614
ISBN 0-915996-10-3

ABOUT THIS ISSUE

An analysis of psychoanalysis may not be the usual NAR fare, but there is such turmoil among the friends and foes of Sigmund Freud, we thought it timely to make sense of that solemn profession. Hence, the long essay by Thomas Thompson that commences on page 14 and surveys the battlefield from the founding father-figure to his present-day rebellious offspring. The cast of characters is large, most notably including author Janet Malcolm and analyst-antagonist Jeffrey Masson, but the Thompson canvas is equally large — and as thorough as we can imagine ourselves able to put our minds around. We commend the essay to your thoughtful attention, and suggest a well-lighted corner with a comfortable couch.



Indeed, the only fault we find with the Freud piece is that it somewhat reduces the space available for our own favorite short stories — but other issues follow, and fiction will occupy its more than fair share of them. In the meantime we trust quality will serve in quantity's place, beginning with Margaret Atwood's "Bluebeard's Egg," the title story from her next collection, already published in Canada by McClelland & Stewart. Patricia O'Donnell adds a small love story, and Helen Haukeness a short piece from a frigid Canadian setting.

For the rest: variety. Mari LoNano's visit to the *S.S. United States,* a gutted ocean liner on the brink of being refurbished or (as one rumor has it) scrapped. Leo Hertzel's notes on tourism in the People's Republic. David Hellerstein's tale of staff exasperations in hospital. Clark Blaise's memoir of growing up to be a writer — from the book *Resident Alien,* scheduled for publication by Penguin Canada in January of 1986. And, finally, the return of NAR Unclassifieds — short prose far too pleasant for category.

This month the NAR has published a new book: M. Kasper's *All Cotton Briefs* — a wry and conscientious volume of illustrated short prose. For details, consult page one, and, for a sample of the Kasper work, page 52.

★ THE NORTH AMERICAN ★

REVIEW

FOUNDED IN 1815 VOLUME 269, NUMBER 4 DECEMBER 1984

FEATURE

14 Freud Redux: Psychoanalysis Turned Inside Out, *by Thomas H. Thompson*

FICTION

30 Bluebeard's Egg, *by Margaret Atwood*
41 A Visit, *by Patricia O'Donnell*
44 Up in the Bush, *by Helen Haukeness*

POETRY

29 Ex-Wife, *by Dabney Stuart*
43 Two Poems, *by James Hearst*

DEPARTMENTS

4 American Eye: THE BIG U: FULL CIRCLE, *by Mari LoNano*
7 Foreign Correspondence: A GUANGZHOU NARRATIVE, *by Leo J. Hertzel*
46 Unclassifieds: *Short takes by James Tate, Roberta Metz Swann, Elaine Margolis, Madeleine Gekiere, and Gail Donohue*
51 The Present Case: THE ASSISTANT, *by David Hellerstein*
56 The Literary Life: A NORTH AMERICAN MEMOIR: REVENGE, *by Clark Blaise*
62 Books & Authors: ILLINOIS SHORT FICTION, *by Perry Glasser*

THE NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW [ISSN 0029-2397], December 1984, Vol. 269, No. 4. Published quarterly, in March, June, September, December by the University of Northern Iowa, 1222 West 27th Street, Cedar Falls, Iowa 50614. Annual subscription rates: $9.00 in the United States and its possessions, $10.00 in Canada and Latin America, $11.00 in all other countries. Second class postage paid at Cedar Falls, Iowa 50614. Copyright © 1984 by the University of Northern Iowa. All rights, including translation into other languages, reserved. No part of this periodical may be reproduced without the permission of THE NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW. Opinions expressed by contributors do not necessarily reflect those of the editors or of the University of Northern Iowa. Unsolicited manuscripts will not be returned unless accompanied by self-addressed envelope with sufficient postage affixed. Fiction manuscripts will not be read until October 1, 1984. Claims for subscriber copies not received must be made within six months of date of publication. POSTMASTER: Send change of address to *The North American Review*, University of Northern Iowa, 1222 West 27th Street, Cedar Falls, Iowa 50614. THE NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW is indexed in the Annual Bibliography of English Language and Literature, the Humanities Index, Index to Little Magazines, Index of American Periodical Verse, the Book Review Index, and others. Member of the Coordinating Council of Literary Magazines (CCLM). Article reprints and back file volumes in microform are available from University Microfilms International, 300 N. Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106 or 18 Bedford Row, London WCIR 4EJ. U.S. and Canadian newsstand distribution by Eastern News Distributors, Inc., 111 Eighth Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10011.

EDITOR
Robley Wilson, Jr.

POETRY
Peter Cooley

DESIGN
James Buckels
Roy Behrens

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS
Margaret Atwood
David Hellerstein
Leo J. Hertzel
Kenneth Lash
Barry Lopez
Stephen Minot
Mary Peterson
Scott Russell Sanders
Lawrence Sturhahn

BUSINESS MANAGER
Charlotte L. Wilson

EDITORIAL &
BUSINESS OFFICES:

University of Northern Iowa
Cedar Falls, Iowa 50614

RATES:

$2.50 a copy; $9.00 a year in the U.S. and its possessions, $10.00 in Canada and Latin America; all others $11.00

Cover: *James Buckels*

Illustrations: *James Buckels (30-40), Samuel Cameron (41, 44), Wayne Hogan, M. Kasper, Cor Hoekstra, Margaret Bremner.*

The Big U: Full Circle

MARI LONANO

The United States *sailing from Bremerhaven's Columbus Quai in the late summer of 1954.*

It's a warm day in October when I drive down to the Norfolk International Terminal where the *S.S. United States* has been berthed for fifteen years. It seems somehow appropriate that here in Hampton Roads where she was built, she should also be torn apart. Signs with "Auction" and "Tour" point in the direction of Cruise International Travel where the tour buses are parked. For $7.95, you can take a bus to the ship so you can explore her.

Empty trailers, old railroad boxcars, dumpsters, and other odds and ends of industry line the drive to the ship. I can smell the Chesapeake Bay although I cannot see it. It is one of those days in Norfolk, Virginia when the air is filled with heat and waste.

The *United States* is the largest ship I've ever seen: 990 feet long, 101 feet and six inches wide. She displaces 57,000 tons. She can carry two thousand passengers and one thousand crew members. In her prime, when she sailed from New York to Bremerhaven, Germany, she crossed the ocean in less than four days. They say she was the best, and that there will never be another like her.

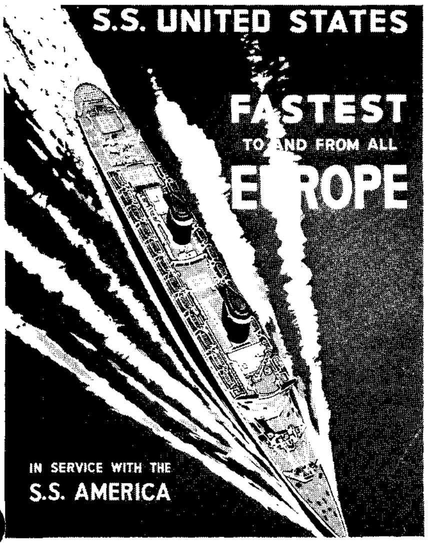
Across an inlet is the Navy Base. Dozens of destroyers sit waiting. The *S.S. United States* herself was built to be turned into a troop carrier—should the need ever arise—that could hold between fourteen and twenty thousand troops. For this added feature, the U.S. government paid forty percent of her total cost. Thirty years after she was built, she remains the largest ship ever built in the United States, and although she has been out of service for fifteen years, she is still the fastest. Although her true top speed was never known (she never used more than three-quarters of her potential), she did have the known ability to sail at an incredible forty-eight land miles per hour. On her maiden voyage, she set the transatlantic crossing record in the remarkable time of three days, ten hours, and forty minutes. Her return trip took a few hours longer. Advertisements for the ship proclaimed: "Europe's only a long weekend away."

I stare at her. She's twelve stories high and five city blocks long. In all my years of hanging around the piers in New York, I never saw anything this large. She needs a paint job; she's covered with rust. For fifteen years, she has been berthed in the waters of the Elizabeth River right across from the Newport News Shipbuilding and Drydock where she was built between 1950 and 1952. She was so large and heavy a special drydock was constructed for her. When she was ready for launching, the drydock was flooded with water for twenty-four hours until she floated for the first time. It seems sad to me that a ship that was the beginning of an era—the nineteen-fifties, the post-war years—the fastest, most talked-about ship ever built, should have lasted as a cruise ship for less than twenty years. I wonder how such dreams can die.

The woman at the gangplank makes me sign a release form. Empty ships are dangerous, she tells me. I am not worried about danger—I'm worried about the lack of air. The "Big U," as she was called, has been closed since 1969. Under her former owner, United States Lines, she was getting ready to sail her first around-the-world cruise in 1969. Thousands of men had been hired to paint her; dining rooms were set up, beds made, menus planned. Suddenly the cruise was cancelled. The reasons have been disputed, but most people say the unions finally made it impossible to keep her cost-effective. It was as if, according to one woman, there had been an enormous party and everyone just disappeared. The smoke stacks are half painted; the dining tables ready for guests; the beds still made.

From the flying bridge I can look out over the Elizabeth River to Newport News, where the *United States* was born from a thousand dreams that William Francis Gibbs had of the fastest, most beautiful ship ever built. I look again at her chipped and peeling paint, the rust and neglect, the barnacles clinging to the bulkhead, and I wonder if it doesn't tell us something perverse about progress. She cost $80 million to build in 1950-52. She was sold to Richard Hadley last year for $5 million. It is said that Hadley will spend an estimated $185 million to turn her into "the most luxurious cruise ship ever built." I wonder about superlatives; after all, she was supposed to be all of that when she was built. The final irony is that she will not be renovated here where she was constructed but will travel to Bremerhaven, where she used to end her crossings and where labor is cheaper, unions not as strong.

Inside, ghosts walk. I feel as though I can hear a Meyer Davis orchestra playing in the distance—people dancing and strolling along the Promenade. I can almost see women in those pastel tulle dresses so popular in the 'fifties; their hair lacquered into bouffants. The tourists are whispering about the Duke and Duchess of Windsor sailing the Atlantic in the "Duck Suite." And I think about the poor Duke and Duchess—doomed to a life they thought would be wonderful—crossing the ocean again and again.



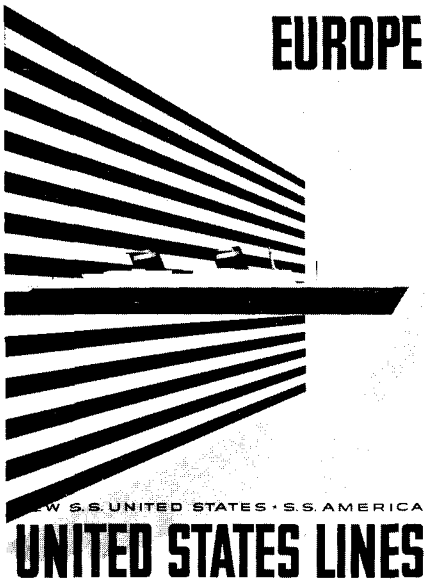
Another advertisement of the day claims, "The Ballroom is like New Year's Eve every night," and I think about frantic exiles trying to have New Year's Eves.

The *S.S. United States* was one of the last of the three-class cruise ships ever built in this country: first class, cabin, and tourist. The first-class accommodations were supposed to be the "most luxurious in the world" (all the information about this ship claims superlatives—the best this, the last that): embroidered Irish linen, spacious bedrooms, thick plush towels, contemporary art work. While I am not able to see the entire ship (much of it is closed off), I am allowed down the corridor to the famous "Duck Suite." This suite has a king-size bed (the only one on any cruise ship because the Duke insisted) and ducks in marshland painted throughout the suite. People sailed the Atlantic often, famous people, and the ads for this liner claimed kinship with these famous people. Many of them considered her a home away from home.

Most of the rooms visible on the tour have either been torn apart completely—or are halfway there. Crates and packing barrels are everywhere. The auction house, Guernsey's, is working around the clock to carry off "the largest auction ever held". Art work has been torn from the walls, or pasted with auction numbers. Everything, even the art, was supposed to be fireproof on this ship—the only exception the seven pianos, and the butcher blocks in the kitchens. Another claim to fame. The furniture was mostly built-in—enamel over aluminum—in the pastel colors of the fifties. The furnishings are in fine condition, another plus from the Government, which installed a special dehumidifying system that has kept the contents of the ship in virtually perfect shape. But fifteen years of no air is becoming overwhelming. I sit for awhile on the Promenade Deck and watch the other tourists.

When I resume my tour, I go into the First Class Dining Room (most of what is visible on this tour is First Class) where many of the tables still wear tablecloths. Beautiful, pure white linen. Around me the walls are peeling paint, the air is heavy and dull, but I can imagine what it was like to sit down to dinner on this ship as she sailed swiftly across the Atlantic. I sit awhile and pretend a waiter will be by any minute with a cold martini. I pretend I am traveling to England for the first time, and I think of Oxford, gardens, royalty. When I move into the Grand Ballroom, the first things I notice are the etched glass panels that surround the dance floor. I've been told they are to be sold, also, and it's impossible to imagine this round, graceful room without them. I look up at the bandstand and hear faint music.

Upstairs are the Officer's Quarters (the best Officer's Quarters ever built), and they do look comfortable. There are maps, charts, ashtrays, and books strewn around. I glance at the books: Yukio Mishima's *The Sound of Waves*, J.P. Marquand's *Sincerely, Willis Wade.* For some reason I am surprised to find a book by Mishima here. In another room are New York City telephone books from different years. I can't resist checking my addresses through the years. It feels odd, finding my name and number in these books—as though someone might have called me from this ship—or thought about it.



The rooms that are open in Tourist Class are ugly as only something from the 1950s can be ugly: linoleum floors stained yellow with time, orange and gray furniture, large-patterned hideous printed fabrics at the windows. *Art moderne.* The colors now used in airport lounges to discourage long stays.

The ship is a museum of the nineteen-fifties in every way. She made dozens of trips a year—from New York to Southampton to Bremerhaven—and back. And she was never less than 90% full when she sailed. And yet, in 1969, she never sailed again.

Guernsey's, the New York auction house that won the bid on the *S.S. United States*, had a massive job. They won the bid a scant two weeks before

the auction, and in spite of hiring hundreds of temporaries to strip the ship, were not yet finished the first few days of the auction. Things were half-packed—some rooms still complete with furniture and artwork (the finest decorative artists of the time were commissioned to design and complement her interiors). Yet, while this was billed as the "largest auction ever," few people were on hand during the three days I attended. And fewer still cared to bid at the price the auctioneer opened the bidding with. She kept lamenting the audience's disinterest, and then lowered the starting prices. I felt these people wanted to see something as majestic as the *S.S. United States* stripped down to size. Guernsey's claims that the auction went extremely well, but the tour bus drivers tell me it went badly, that another auction house—Marine Brokerage—moved in at the end, and the auction goes on, every weekend. One bus driver I spoke to told me he really thought the ship was being sold for scrap—never to be renovated at all.

I prefer to believe what I've been told: that she is on her way to the Caribbean to have her engines worked on, and then goes to Bremerhaven, where she will be renovated into "the finest, most luxurious cruise ship ever known." I want to believe this because she continues to seem majestic to me, and I have friends who sailed on her, who really drank martinis ($1 U.S.), and listened to the bands in the Grand Ballroom; and friends who never sailed her but who saw their friends off for a first trip to Europe. She stands for things, this ship, for "American ingenuity" and hardiness, for romance and enchantment. She meant dreams for people—the ones who built her and the ones who sailed on her. And while I realize that ships are inanimate objects, I feel something for this huge, sleek, rusty ship that used to travel the Atlantic faster than anything before or since. She deserved something better and longer than a mere seventeen years at sea. ☐

UNITED STAT
UNITED STATES

Above: First Class ballroom. At right: The auction, lightly attended.

A Guangzhou Narrative

LEO J. HERTZEL

> "There are a formidable series of hurdles, mechanical, political, and cultural, standing in the way of foreigners hopeful of making contact with ordinary Chinese in everyday settings."
>
> Stephen W. Mosher,
> *Broken Earth: The Rural Chinese*
> Macmillan, 1983.

"We visit Taiwan last week. People there friendly. We see beautiful things Chiang-Kai-shek and soldiers bring out China." Inside the little tour bus, Norman shouts to Ho, the guide, as the bus moves through the heart of Guangzhou. "You been Taiwan?"

Ho smiles a tour guide smile. His eyes move upward and appear to have no focus. He does not answer the question.

The street is a thick double stream of vehicles: heavy open trucks hauling logs and sand and coal, double buses packed with dark faces that stare down into our nearly vacant tour bus, bicycles with riders in white shirts that flare out behind. Moving very slowly on a side street, a man and woman in double harness strain at a huge paper-covered box on skids. "People mountain, people sea," the Chinese say of a crowd, and the walks on both sides of the street are a sea of moving people, wide-brim, round, white hats against the light rain.

"Notice, the traffic here is very strong. Do you notice the traffic?" Ho smiles and looks approvingly at the flood of movement. The traffic is progress for the people of Guangdong and all of China, he says. "Is it like your country, this traffic jam?" he asks. The bus stops abruptly, jolts, throws the five passengers forward nearly out of our seats. A woman walks a bicycle in front of the bus, between the bus and a green truck ahead which is not moving.

"In America, we say bicycle man has right of way," Norman shouts to Ho. "Car wait if people want walk. We have that regulation. Not always is regulation observed, however. Some young person choose not observe regulation." Norman shouts slowly in the cool bus air. He pronounces each syllable distinctly, reducing the words to a series of short, isolated sounds. We have that regu la tion. Apparently, this halting time, this shouting, these dislocated sentences are meant as concessions to Ho's difficulties in understanding English. But Ho has given us no reason to think he has any problems understanding English.

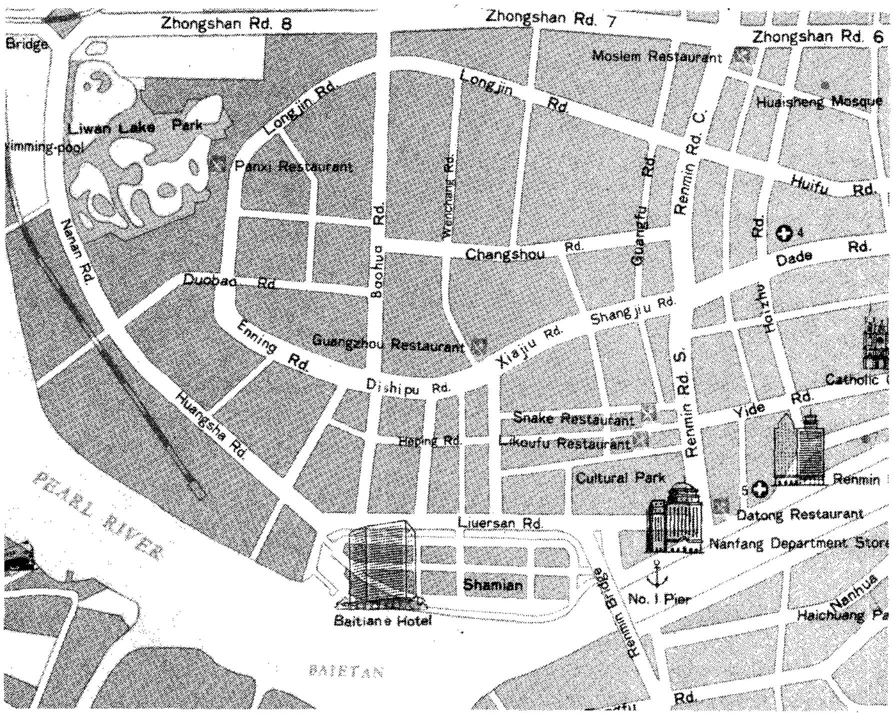
"Ho, about marriage here, concubines? You have concubines?" Ruby speaks from her window seat across the aisle from Norman.

Ruby and Norman have come here to Canton from some kind of human rights conference in Budapest last month. "You could say we represented the United States," she told me this morning at breakfast. "We were the only Americans there."

Last night in the lobby of the White Swan Hotel, between the great bird cage and the waterfall, Norman introduced himself. "Norman Cooper." He seemed happy to see another American. He smiled. He extended a hand. "I'm an academic. New York state. My wife Ruby over there is in psychology. I guess we'll be traveling around Canton with you two for the next few days. I know the Chinese here call this place Guan-show, something like that, but to me it's Canton. You know what I mean." He was a muscular middle age. He wore a Greek sailor cap, black and yellow striped sport shirt, wide white leather belt low around Lee jeans, white tennis shoes. He wears the same things today.

The bus pulls around the stalled truck, honking, the truck with open hood, engine exposed, two men in Mao caps and green coveralls peering inside, studying wires.

The road is not smooth. The bus bounces along and makes a turn to follow the Pearl River—rows of uneven two-story buildings, open store fronts, propped awnings, wide eaves shielding the walks from the rain, little balconies with laundry on ropes and plants in pots, the rich green of tropical growth, signs in Chi-


Zhongshan Rd. 8
Bridge
Zhongshan Rd. 7
Zhongshan Rd. 6
Moslem Restaurant
Liwan Lake Park
wimming-pool
Longjin Rd.
Longjin Rd.
Huaisheng Mosque
Panxi Restaurant
Wenchang Rd.
Guangfu Rd.
Renmin Rd. C.
Huifu Rd.
Baohua Rd.
Changshou Rd.
Rd.
4
Dade Rd.
Nanan Rd.
Duobao Rd.
Haizhu
Shangjiu Rd.
Enning Rd.
Guangzhou Restaurant
Xiajiu Rd.
Dishipu Rd.
Catholic
Huangsha Rd.
Renmin Rd. S.
Yide Rd.
Snake Restaurant
Haping Rd.
Likoufu Restaurant
Cultural Park
5
Renmin
PEARL RIVER
Datong Restaurant
Liuersan Rd.
Nanfang Department Store
Shamian
Renmin Bridge
No. 1 Pier
Nanhua
Haichuang Pa
Baitiane Hotel
BAIETAN
Rd.

nese: BIG NEW CHINESE PAINTING ROOM, EASTERN SEA MARKET, GUANGZHOU RESTAURANT, GUANGZHOU CHARCOAL. A girl in blue coveralls and a blue beret wheels a dolly loaded with thick wheels of charcoal the size of dinner plates out of the charcoal factory and begins stacking the wheels along the curb beside a pile of woven baskets.

"We have word for that in English," Ruby talks loudly to Ho. "Word is estuary. *Es*tuary."

The river here is muddy brown, thick-looking water flowing between smooth stone banks. Ho is lecturing to us about the river. It drains half a continent, he says. It is part of Chinese history from very ancient times.

"River salty?" Norman shouts.

"Yes. Salty." The question confuses Ho for a moment. "Salty? Not salty."

"River all the time muddy?"

"Muddy. Yes, muddy. It does not change very much."

"Fish in river?"

"Fish? Yes, many many fish."

"Whales?" Ruby yells.

"Sharks?" Norman shouts.

All day they have been asking these strange questions. This morning when Ho gave Ruby a bottle of orange soda at the Friendship Store, Norman asked, "Ho, just exactly how is this stuff made?" as if Ho worked at the bottling plant and memorized the formula. When Ho pointed out a bicycle factory and said it employed ten thousand workers, Ruby asked, "Ho, where do they live?" as if he must know all ten thousand personally or maybe she meant they all live together in one big building. It is impossible to know what these questions really mean. Certainly they are not intended to be humorous. Ruby and Norman wait politely now for answers to their questions about sharks and whales just as they waited politely a while back after Norman asked if Ho had visited Taiwan recently.

"No sharks," says Ho, "no whales."

"Ask him why they don't have pavement here," Ruby turns to Norman across the aisle. The bus jolts along and the heavy camera with the long protruding lens bounces on the strap around her neck.

"In road here, all mud," Norman shouts. "Why no fix road?"

"As the people build for the future, they do one thing in the proper time. Some things will wait."

"I am happy for your explanation."

The tourist bus is going to Zhon Shan Memorial Hall, the seamless building erected to the memory of Sun Yat-sen. I have a little tourist pamphlet about Guangzhou I found in my room back at the hotel. The pamphlet is published by Japan Air Lines, and three Japanese stewardesses smile encouragingly from the back cover. I turn to the page about the Memorial Hall and read slowly in the bouncing bus. "Built in 1931, Zong Shan Memorial Hall by the contributions from the people of Guang Dong and the overseas Chinese. This memorial hall features its octagonal building designed in a palatial style. This hall, constructed in commemoration of the great achievement of Sun Wen, the forerunner of the Chinese Revolution. The memorial hall is a reinforced concrete building of 41 meters high and has seats for 4,700 of audience. Zhong Shan Memorial Hall is used for the public meetings, performances of the plays and so on. Inside, there are fully equipped with the sound effects system and lighting system. At this hall, evening party for the art and literary sections as well as people's assembly has been held here. . . ."

On this wet afternoon, though, there is no meeting or performance in the hall. Little clusters of people stand about on the huge tiled court in front of the red pillars that support the ornate blue roof over the entrance court. The people are all Orientals—Oriental tourists, perhaps; they take each other's photograph standing in front of the great bronze statue of Sun Yat-sen that dominates the entrance. A few young men lounge beside parked bicycles near a side door. One sees us and yells "O.K." We smile politely and enter through the side door.

We are in a lobby that is a souvenir shop. Glass cases make a counter along the inside wall hung with picture scrolls. The cases hold curios, souvenirs—scrolls in bamboo cases, sets of landscape paintings, dolls, little ivory figures, red boxes decorated with Chinese writing. A young woman sits behind the display sewing what appears to be a rough tapestry. She is listening to fast Chinese music coming from a tiny portable radio on a shelf above her head.

The five of us file past this display on into the Great Hall. A sweep of seats fans wide from a stage. The light is weak, uneven, as if it is coming in through dirty glass. The air smells of dry wood. This Great Hall is a huge, gloomy place. On a seat halfway back in the hall, a man sprawls asleep. On an incline leading to the rear of the stage, a stand holds a sign in Chinese: NO ENTRANCE.

"I'll bet the acoustics in here are perfect," Norman talks to Ruby.

"I'll bet you could hear a pin drop from that stage, dear. You go up there and see how good it is."

"I might sing, Ruby."

Norman moves past the sign and up the ramp. I go back into the souvenir shop.

In a glass case beside a set of brushes and flat slate ink holders are two small red boxes the size of match books, little boxes with something white inside and a rounded piece of glass attached to one side of the box by a metal frame. I ask the woman to give me one look. She opens the case and takes out one of the little boxes and hands it to me. Inside is a tiny white kernel like a single grain of rice. The rounded glass is a magnifying lens attached to the box's side so that the lens points directly at the kernel. I squint and peer through the glass. I see a small egg-shaped blur.

Ho is standing beside me.

"Ho, what is this thing?"

"Ivory. It is a little piece of ivory in the box. On the ivory an artist carved the poem, the whole poem on the little ivory piece. It is a very skillful thing."

I look again and again see a small egg-shaped blur. The lens seems to magnify the kernel a bit, but something is wrong with the distance or maybe with the lens itself. I see no Chinese writing, no carving, no clear outline, only a blur.

"Ho, I can't see any carving in there. Here, take a look yourself."

Ho looks, squints. He lowers the box. He taps it gently on the counter, then raises it to his eye and peers into it again. He frowns, pushing the box hurriedly back across the counter to the waiting, smiling saleswoman. "It is because you do not know Chinese," Ho says.

I can hear a strong, clear voice singing "My Wild Irish Rose." I look inside the Great Hall. Norman is standing on the stage. Ruby stands below in the aisle, looking up at him. She claps her hands. "Bravo," she cheers. Norman bows to her and then begins to sing "The Yellow Rose of Texas."

On the way back to the hotel, Ho asks what we would like to do tomorrow. "I'd like to look at a house," Ruby says. "Can we visit somebody's home?"

In the early evening on the 21st story of the White Swan Hotel, I lean on the balcony, drink tea, and look across Sha Mian Island to the city that stretches beyond to the farthest length of the horizon. In this fading fog light, the city is all dark green foliage and low cream buildings with strings of dim yellow lights marking the lines of receding streets. Rising twists of smoke blend with the lighter fog. Somewhere in the middle of this canvas scene a single red sign flashes on and off, but it is too far away for me to read its message. Below, on the island, the old four- and five-story buildings of the departed French and British concession days crumble patiently, their towers and arches and reception rooms now serving what Ho proudly calls "the citizens." We looked through windows in those buildings this morning on a walk before breakfast and saw no exotic things—saw staircases, stacked beds, hanging laundry, a room full of men eating. Outside in a little park a fast cook at a charcoal grill served thin omelets to a line of patient workers. Yet the guidebook suspects the presence of something strange here on this island. ". . . the ornate Victorian buildings set amidst lush tropical overgrowth produce an ambiance unique in China," the guideline says. Perhaps it comes from this liquid light, dragon breath.

Faint cries of the city drift up through the mist all the way to the 21st floor.

Downstairs in the lobby, over by the door that leads to the swimming pool and the sauna/massage room, colored lights revolve inside a glassed-in disco where young Chinese couples are drifting in, hand in hand, coming to dance to fast music. Most of the girls wear dresses and show a little wobble at their heels, but their escorts wear jeans and t-shirts and appear confident. Some of the t-shirts are decorated with gentle messages in English: Somewhere the Sun is Shining, HUG ME, Salt Lake City.

Morning. The tourist bus moves along Jung Shan Da Liu heading towards the suburbs. "Will we get to visit somebody's house?" We move slowly in heavy traffic, past brick yards, kilns with gray smoke billowing through the straw, unpainted buildings with open fronts and counters inside where people sit drinking morning tea, past traffic-clogged intersections where curved store fronts sit behind posts upholding the overhang. "Only One Child One Family" says a yellow and pink billboard, a mother lovingly holding a fat baby. "Only One Child . . ." it repeats the message. We pass bamboo fences beside which sidewalk vendors have thrown blankets on the ground and squat selling little piles of oranges, eggs. A woman wearing a brilliant white nose and mouth mask shovels steaming waste from the back of a small truck into the bed of a larger one.

The near countryside is hot with life—flocks of geese and ducks, fenced-in creeks, square ponds where men are netting baskets of squirming fish, feathery green rice beds and water buffalo waiting in the mud, rows of cabbages, bean plants laced on poles, rows of chrysanthemum plants in pots "for export," Ho says. The country is tended like a garden.

At the rural commune we are met in the meeting hall by Mr. Lin, a "responsible member of the community," says Ho. When Mr. Lin speaks, Ho listens. A small man, hair receding, perhaps fifty years old, Mr. Lin speaks no English for us. The meeting hall is like a shelter house in an American park with open screened windows and a relief map on a stand at one end: YOU ARE HERE! There are scrolls on the walls, one made by a child or children that begins "The wind and the moon . . ." but I cannot read the rest. We sit at a long table that runs nearly the length of the room, the four tourists on one side and Ho and Mr. Lin directly opposite. We are given tea cups and then hot green tea by a very quiet woman. Mr. Lin will give a description of the work of the commune, Ho tells us. Mr. Lin is fond of statistics: the bushels of beans, pounds of rice, numbers of people, numbers of geese, numbers of ducks, numbers of fish, yards of wool, the money. Ho translates respectfully. "More than two-hundred families in this commune make more than five-thousand *yuan* each month. Do you have questions?"

Ruby has prepared a question. "I've heard that children in these new Chinese families that have only one child, these children are spoiled rotten. I've heard that grandparents give them everything and these children turn out to be little monsters."

Ho translates and Mr. Lin smiles. "That is up to the family. Each family is different."

"But I've heard that China is turning out a whole generation of spoiled children that way. Is anything being done about that?"

"That is up to the family," says Ho.

We go to visit a school. We must leave the bus and walk a short path under an arch to the school yard. On the road beneath the arch a truck is unloading scrap metal, men weighing old transmissions, gear boxes, metal straps. I walk by and look inside an open building, a little wooden storeroom beneath the arched entrance. Inside rests a full barrel of gleaming bolts and nuts; rich yellow-gold, they might be new brass. Behind the barrel stand two young women, workers in blue fatigues and matching berets, round smiling faces looking directly over the barrel at me. It is almost as if they have been waiting for me. I stop and watch as they put their shoulders to the barrel, push, frown, push again, and they topple the barrel; the gleaming metal pieces spill onto the dirt floor in a golden pile. They look up and smile at me, and the scene is a poster, an illustration out of *China Pictorial*, fresh-faced workers happy at their gleaming task, an epiphany. I go on into the courtyard marveling, wondering why they wanted that metal on the ground.

The key word in this school is *discipline*. The word is in the slogan that is a vertical sign on the outside of the three-story cement block building. The word is in the slogan that is spread across the front of each classroom, a banner over each teacher's head. *Discipline.*

This is a middle school, says Ho.

I stand on the porch outside a second floor classroom and peer through the open window into the English Lesson. These students are very young, scarcely middle-school age, maybe eight or nine years old. They sit two to a wooden desk, four desks in a row across the room, seven desks in a line, fifty-six students here reading aloud together from small, grimy English primers. "Are you sure?" and "He is running. He is running in the street." They chant these sentences together with a very pretty young woman teacher who stands on a low platform in the front of the room conducting. She waves her arms and shouts and then rushes to the blackboard to write ING and then tell them what ING means. The disciplined children fidget and steal careful glances at the foreigner staring in their window.

On the way out I look inside the storeroom under the arch. The pieces of shining brass rest in a pile beside the overturned barrel. The worker women are gone.

"We will visit a typical family," says Ho. Mr. Lin gives directions to the driver and we turn off the paved street down a lane between irrigated fields, rows of growing vegetables, a water buffalo standing in the mud. We turn onto a rough lane and come to a stop at a narrow path leading between bamboo fences, small buildings with windows propped open out over the path. "We will visit a typical family of the commune," says Mr. Lin through Ho. "Please stay close."

A tall young woman in a blue quilted jacket and brown slacks comes to greet us. She has a controlled smile that is not altogether friendly; she could be a tough block warden. She takes her place at the end of the little procession and we walk up the uneven path, boards here and there crossing puddles. We are in the midst of a cluster of rural houses, sturdy, low, irregular dwellings that may have been built in stages, room by room, part by part, no long-range plan. There is no clutter. Petunias grow by the fences. Doors face on neat courtyards paved with brick where here and there a child plays alone. I stop and smile at a fat two-year-old who is sitting on some low steps that lead from the path up to his courtyard. The child stares at me and stands up; he is not afraid of this foreign ghost. I ask him his name. But the tall block warden comes from behind and smiles the controlled smile and motions me on. I am not to fall behind here.

We arrive at a two-story building, new with a bright decorative tile court. We turn and enter. The building is smooth cream plaster, a house, a two-story house, a model home that is vacant. It is clean, light, empty. We look at a center room that might be a dining area and tiny rooms off to each side, each with a rope bed frame and a mattress in a plastic cover, mosquito net pulled neatly back and fastened to the post. We file up the narrow stairs to the second floor. There is a bathroom with a Western-style toilet bowl planted squarely in the middle of the room. We stand and stare at it for a quiet moment.

We will visit a true lived-in home. We go half a block over the rough path and turn right through another gate. We are in a cool brick yard where, kneeling to our left, an old woman with stringy white hair falling under a round reed hat is feeding a fat child from a bowl. She gives the child a bite with her chopsticks and then pauses, holding a pose, chopsticks extended. Standing on the bricks beside her, the fat child swallows. White rice gruel is smeared on his mouth. He stares blankly at us.

Behind us the doors to the house are open. We turn and look in at a wide room with chairs on either side; along the back wall red scrolls hang behind a long table. Shelves are fastened to the wall above the table. One shelf holds a huge, shining silver portable stereo radio, a true boom box, and on the shelf above it is a square breadbox-size object covered with green plastic. An old pendulum clock on the wall moves its weight back and forth while a ceiling fan turns slowly above. The room has a warm brown tile floor. Through doors to the left and right we can see bamboo frame beds with mosquito nets pulled neatly up. Above these doors are little red paper scrolls that say in Chinese COME AND GO WITH PEACE. This is a family room, a living room, a stage for a play.

Wayne Hogan

Someone is at home.

In the room is a man, maybe forty-five years old, sitting in a chair beneath the snappy stereo. He is dressed in a sagging undershirt and green pants. He is wearing one sandal and has kicked off the other, his crossed legs allowing him to dangle the bare foot freely. His hair is brushed straight back and upward so that it stands nearly upright, looking as if it were blown by a steady wind. Perhaps there is something wrong with his eyes; he squints as he rocks back and forth in his chair. He stands, and Mr. Lin through Ho introduces the man as Cheung, the master of this house. We file into the room and sit along the walls on chairs facing Cheung.

Ho translates and Mr. Lin talks. Cheung says nothing. Cheung, says Ho, is the head of a household of six. His wife and two children are away now, the wife at work in the wool factory and the children in a machine shop. That is Cheung's grandson out in the yard being watched by Cheung's old mother. Cheung himself is a night worker in a warehouse. Yes, this is a good home. He and his family are very comfortable here. We can see the modern comforts in this room. Yes, Cheung and his family save some money every month. These are good times. Life is better now than back in the old days.

"Ask Cheung, when retire, have retirement plan?" Norman shouts.

"Maybe in a few years he can retire. Not just now."

"Cheung have TV?"

Mr. Lin gets up hurriedly and moves behind Cheung to the shelf above his head. Mr. Lin jerks the green plastic cover off the box to reveal a shining table model television set. Cheung turns and looks up at it.

"Cheung and his family watch the television every night," says Ho.

"Ho," Norman shouts, "you make computers here in Canton?"

After a moment of thought, Ho talks briefly with Mr. Lin and then answers, "Yes. We make the computers."

"Cheung have computer?"

Ho is surprised by this question. He looks at Mr. Lin. They confer. "Yes. Cheung has the computer."

"What Cheung use computer *for*?"

Again the two men talk. "Mr. Lin says Cheung uses the computer to figure some interest on some money he has, sometimes when he gets some money to save."

"Cheung have software, play games?"

It seems that Ho does not fully understand this question. Perhaps it goes beyond his imagination. He looks at Norman, waiting for something more.

"Play the computer game. Cheung have the software? Play the computer game?"

Ho looks at Norman for a moment longer. He does not translate this question for Mr. Lin. Finally, Ho speaks. "No." He shakes his head, "No games." His eyes move upward and seem to have no focus.

The interview is over. We file outside.

Grandmother Cheung and the baby are still in the middle of the court, but she is no longer feeding him. His face is clean. Now he perches on a bright silver tricycle. It must be very new; its wheels glisten. His feet dangle inches above the pedals. Sitting unsteadily, the child does not appear to be afraid, but he is clearly uncomfortable on this strange seat. Grandmother Cheung looks at us and then proudly extends a hand towards the child, inviting us to look closely at him and his silver toy.

The bus rolls toward the White Swan.

"Do you like the Chinese cuisine?" Ho asks. "Chinese cuisine is very famous in the world. The Chinese banquet is very special. Do you like the Chinese cuisine?"

"What you have in mind?"

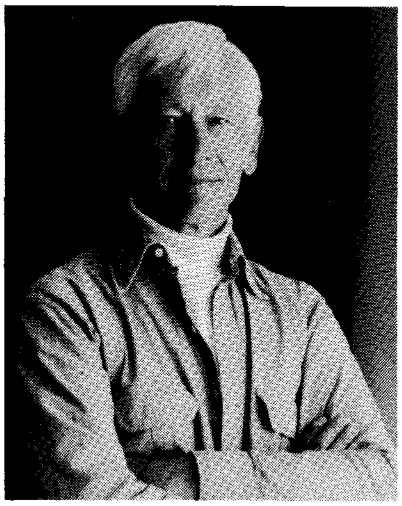
"Tonight we can eat the Chinese cuisine, big Chinese banquet. What do you think?" Suddenly, Ho has become a smiling salesman. He is selling a twelve-course Cantonese banquet at a big local restaurant for only an extra 25 *yuan* apiece and the banquet will last two hours. If we do not want the Chinese banquet, he says, we may eat the tour package dinner at the White Swan, but he thinks the tour package dinner will be very plain this evening.

"We choose Chinese cuisine," Norman shouts.

"Cuisine," Ruby shouts. "Ho, I want one of those hats, too." She points to the stream of people along the street side wearing the wide round hats. "You get me one of those hats?"

The main dining room of the White Swan Hotel is unevenly lit by crystal chandeliers that hang in a line across the center of the room, a room that looks as large as a park. This evening the room is full of guests, aisle on aisle, row on row, eaters sitting at little four-person tables, looking like middle-aged businessmen,

ESSAY ON AIR
Reg Saner



Green Feathers

Five minutes till dawn
and a moist breath of pine resin comes to me
as from across a lake. It smells of wet lumber, naked and fragrant,
whose sap is another nostalgia.

In the early air
we keep trying to catch sight of something lost up ahead,
a moment when the light seems to have seen us
exactly as we wish we were.

Like a heap of green feathers poised on the rim of a cliff?
Like a sure thing that hasn't quite happened?
Like a marvelous idea that won't work?

Routinely amazing—
how moss tufts, half mud, keep supposing
almost nothing is hopeless. How even the dimmest potato
grew eyes on faith the light would be there
and it was.

102 pages
$12.95 hardcover
$ 5.95 softcover

A new book of poems by the winner of
the Walt Whitman Award *(Climbing Into the Roots)*
and the
National Poetry Series Open Competition *(So This Is The Map)*.

OHIO REVIEW BOOKS
Ellis Hall
Ohio University
Athens, Ohio 45701
(614) 594-5889

Copies of articles from this publication are now available from the UMI Article Clearinghouse.

UMI Article Clearinghouse

Mail to: University Microfilms International
300 North Zeeb Road, Box 91 Ann Arbor, MI 48106

dark-suited Oriental Rotarians. The room throbs with a low roar, the sounds of dishes, chopsticks, muffled conversations.

The two of us sit at a table off in a far corner near the wall, off to the far side of the dining room separated from the main throng of eaters by a wide aisle, so far from them that from here we cannot see them clearly in this uneven light. We have been placed in this distant corner by a frozen-faced hostess wearing a red silk dress with a slit skirt, who smiled tolerantly and then led us silently to this waiting table.

There is no menu. A waitress brings the food. As Ho predicted, the meal is plain: soup, a plate of *tofu,* a plate of roast pork, rice, bottles of warm beer. We take long drinks of the warm beer. It is very strong and we are thirsty. After the soup, we pick up the chopsticks and begin eating. I can feel the warm beer circulating inside me.

"Did you enjoy yourself today?" she says. "How'd you like that commune?"

I begin to laugh. "'Cheung have software? Play games?' I can't believe that Norman really asked those questions. How could anybody ask those questions?"

"Ho didn't really know how to handle that."

"Can you imagine Cheung playing computer games? What's wrong with that Norman?"

I take a long drink from my glass.

"I think he was serious."

"Would anybody believe that story? I mean, believe that somebody would ask that kind of question in a Chinese farm commune?" I laugh so hard I put my chopsticks down in my bowl and lean back in my chair. I can feel tears in my eyes. I can feel the beer warm.

"Donkey Kong? Frogger?" She puts her chopsticks down and laughs until her face is red and tears well in her eyes and begin running down her face.

I think we are the only people laughing in this room. I drink half a glass of beer and look around. Some of the business-like diners at far tables have turned and stare in our direction across the distance, though they are so far away I cannot clearly see any indications of disapproval.

The waitress brings another large bottle of beer, pours some into my glass.

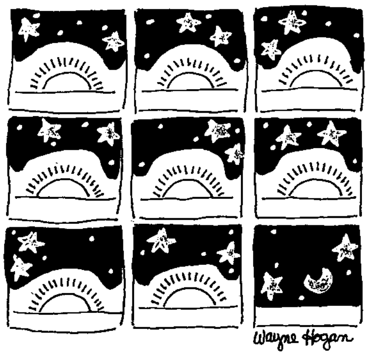
"I'd like to tell somebody that story. It's too good to . . . Who would believe that story? Would you believe it? Come on, if you hadn't been there and seen the whole thing, would you believe it if I told you the story?"

I laugh and begin to cough and cannot finish the other questions stacked up in my mind. We look at each other and seeing the other laughing makes each of us laugh the more.

I think we are beginning to become conspicuous, the only Westerners in this huge room, off in the corner, rudely coughing their food. I drink a little more beer. I retrieve the chopsticks, pick up the rice bowl, place a piece of pork on the rice, lift the bowl to my chin, begin to push the rice and meat into my mouth, but the insanity of those questions overtakes me again and I burst out laughing again, even louder, a laughing cough. Some of the rice spills across the table.

"Pac Man," I cough.

"Maybe we'd better get out of here," she says. "Look, Norman isn't so bad really. I know those things he says are wild, but I think he just wants to learn about China. He's not as bad as you make him out. He's really harmless. I don't think he knows exactly what to say so he just asks whatever comes in his head."



"How about Ruby? Concubines? You have concubines?"

It is useless to try to eat any more. We finish the beer in our glasses and get up from the table. Dizzy from the beer, holding our laughter carefully, we walk slowly past the hostess onto the second floor balcony overlooking the elaborate lobby. I breathe deeply and some of the laughter dissolves. We stand and look down at the fish pond and its little bridge, the big bird cage, the crashing water that falls from a floor above past a little grotto and into the pond below, all of the lobby shops with lighted showcase fronts, the book store, the art shop with its lattice entrance and hanging scrolls.

"Look over there by the fish pond. It's Ruby. She's wearing one of those hats."

I look and it is Ruby and Norman walking across the lobby. Norman still wears his Greek sailor cap, and Ruby now wears one of the round, white, stiff-brim local hats. Norman looks up and sees us leaning on the balcony rail. He waves.

"They're coming up here, I think."

"Behave yourself now," she laughs.

"You're early," I say to them as they come up the stairway. "I thought that cuisine would take you two at least three hours."

"We couldn't eat that much food," Norman says. "It was okay, but after a while it all started tasting alike. After about two hours I finally told Ho we couldn't eat any more. We'd had enough."

"Sometimes I was eating things I didn't even know what they were," Ruby adds, her hat flopping as she talks.

"What'd you do then?"

"Well, Ruby wanted to look at some jewelry so we told Ho we'd like to see a jewelry store. He took us to this factory, up on the third floor of some building, a place where they make the stuff. All kinds of rings and things like that. People working there even though it's dark outside. Interesting place."

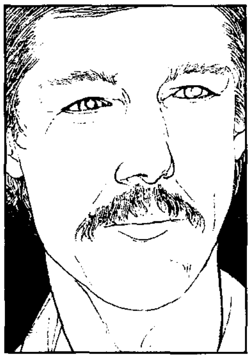
"Buy anything?"

"Buy anything? No. Ruby wanted to buy something, souvenirs, you know. She buys stuff wherever we go. She bought one of those local hats, in case you didn't notice. Anyway, we wanted to buy a ring but you know we looked at everything and we just decided not to. The quality wasn't good. I think the problem is these people haven't really developed their aesthetic sense very far yet." ☐

LEO J. HERTZEL is the NAR's North Country correspondent turned world traveler; next stop: Europe. . . . MARI LONANO lives in Virginia Beach. . . . PERRY GLASSER teaches at Drake University, and has become one of our more-or-less-regular short fiction reviewers. . . . CLARK BLAISE makes his home presently in Iowa City. . . . DAVID HELLERSTEIN is a frequent contributor to Harper's, Esquire, Ms., *et al.*

THE COORDINATING COUNCIL OF LITERARY MAGAZINES ANNOUNCES THE WINNERS OF THE 1984 GENERAL ELECTRIC FOUNDATION AWARDS FOR YOUNGER WRITERS:

JOHN GODFREY
for poetry
published in
GANDHABBA
and MAG CITY,
New York.



PAUL HOOVER
for poetry
published in
ANOTHER
CHICAGO MAGAZINE,
Chicago.

MICHELLE HUNEVEN
for fiction
published in
WILLOW SPRINGS,
Cheney,
Washington.

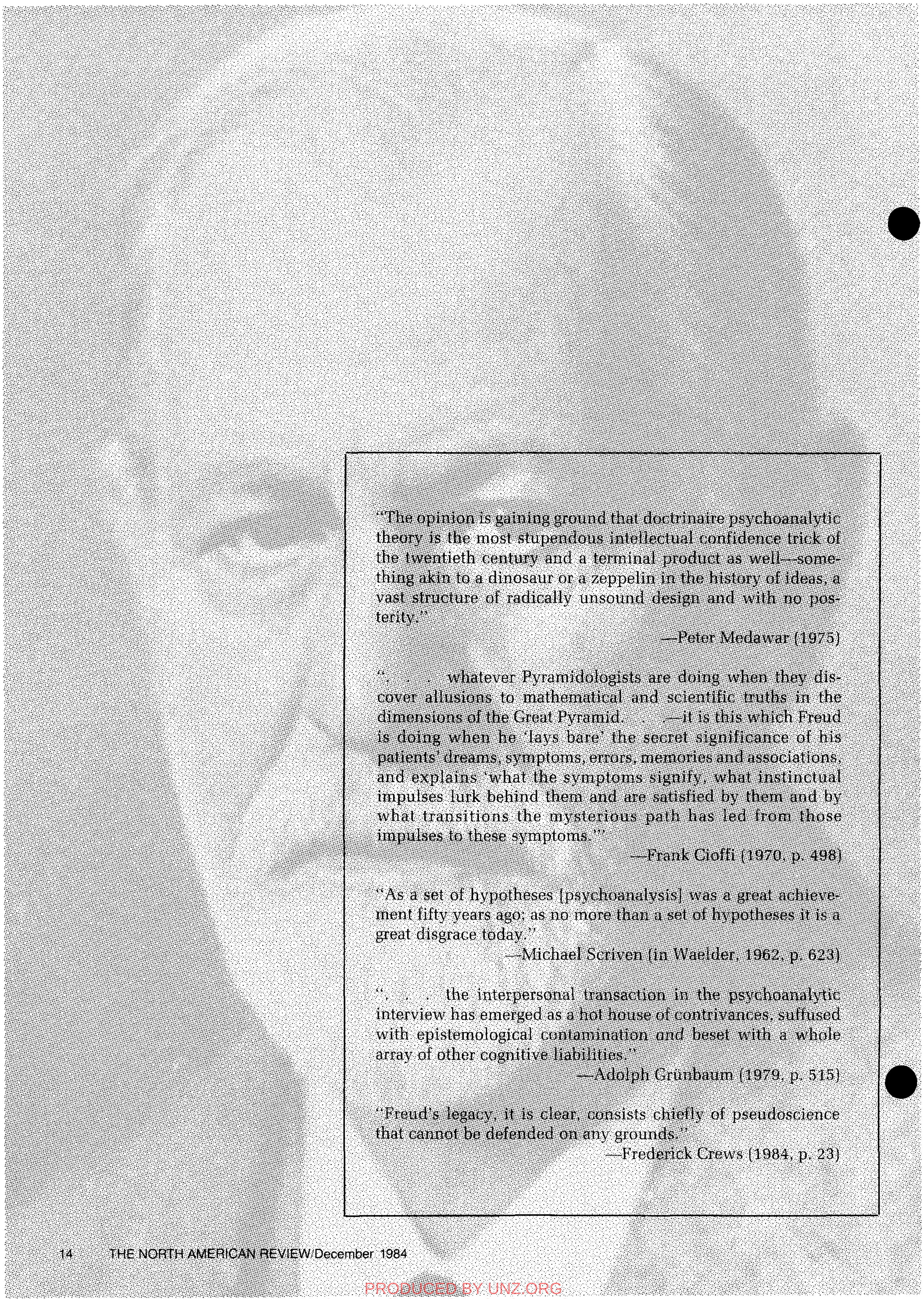
TAMA JANOWITZ
for fiction
published in
MISSISSIPPI REVIEW,
Hattiesburg,
Mississippi.

MARGO JEFFERSON
for
a literary essay
published in
GRAND STREET,
New York.

RUDY WILSON
for fiction
published in
THE PARIS
REVIEW,
New York.

The awards recognize excellence in new writers while honoring the significant contribution of America's literary magazines. This year's judges were Doris Grumbach, Elizabeth Hardwick, Kenneth Koch, James Alan McPherson and Gary Soto. For information about THE GENERAL ELECTRIC FOUNDATION AWARDS FOR YOUNGER WRITERS, please write to: CCLM, 2 Park Avenue, New York 10016.

Line portraits by David Johnson.



"The opinion is gaining ground that doctrinaire psychoanalytic theory is the most stupendous intellectual confidence trick of the twentieth century and a terminal product as well—something akin to a dinosaur or a zeppelin in the history of ideas, a vast structure of radically unsound design and with no posterity."

—Peter Medawar (1975)

". . . whatever Pyramidologists are doing when they discover allusions to mathematical and scientific truths in the dimensions of the Great Pyramid. . . .—it is this which Freud is doing when he 'lays bare' the secret significance of his patients' dreams, symptoms, errors, memories and associations, and explains 'what the symptoms signify, what instinctual impulses lurk behind them and are satisfied by them and by what transitions the mysterious path has led from those impulses to these symptoms.'"

—Frank Cioffi (1970, p. 498)

"As a set of hypotheses [psychoanalysis] was a great achievement fifty years ago; as no more than a set of hypotheses it is a great disgrace today."

—Michael Scriven (in Waelder, 1962, p. 623)

". . . the interpersonal transaction in the psychoanalytic interview has emerged as a hot house of contrivances, suffused with epistemological contamination and beset with a whole array of other cognitive liabilities."

—Adolph Grünbaum (1979, p. 515)

"Freud's legacy, it is clear, consists chiefly of pseudoscience that cannot be defended on any grounds."

—Frederick Crews (1984, p. 23)

FREUD REDUX

Psychoanalysis Turned Inside Out

BY THOMAS H. THOMPSON

One of the images that haunts the memories of those old enough to recall the newsreels of the 'forties is the sight of those enduring B-17s, battered and riddled with flak, but still airworthy, limping back to base and landing safely. It is an image of a flying machine so constructed that it took a very large amount of enemy fire to bring it down. Given any luck at all, one might expect to return whole from a bombing raid in such a craft even if the flak was unusually heavy and accurate.

Freud's psychoanalysis, like those old flying machines, is likewise a survivor of the wars. If psychoanalysis were going to be shot down by flak of the sort that Peter Medawar, Frank Cioffi, Michael Scriven, and, more recently, Frederick Crews and Adolph Grünbaum have aimed at it, it would be only a prescientific memory nowadays—like animal magnetism or phrenology. But still it flies. The craft wavers a little these days; it is not as responsive to the controls as when Sigmund Freud himself was the trusty pilot of the craft. Psychoanalysis is showing its age. Yet Freudianism is not to be counted a museum piece.

Malcolm, Janet (1981). *Psychoanalysis: The Impossible Profession.* New York: Alfred A. Knopf.
Malcolm, Janet (1984). *In the Freud Archives.* New York: Alfred A. Knopf.
Breger, Louis (1981). *Freud's Unfinished Journey: Conventional and Critical Perspectives in Psychoanalytical Theory.* London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
Masson, Jeffrey Moussaieff (1984). *The Assault on Truth: Freud's Suppression of the Seduction Theory.* New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

It is not easy to set the precise date of the beginnings of psychoanalysis. Freud himself told Ernest Jones (1953, p. 354) that he had asked his good friend Wilhelm Fliess whether Fliess thought a marble tablet would ever grace the table in the Bellevue restaurant bearing the inscription, "Here the secret of dreams was revealed to Dr. Sigm. Freud . . ." That was the spot where on July 24, 1895, Freud first divined the secret of one of his own dreams, the famous one about "Irma's injection." If that was the beginning, then psychoanalysis has existed almost ninety years, and it is still not clear precisely what was born in Freud's mind on that fateful day in the Bellevue. The questions of identity and respectability remain psychoanalytic albatrosses almost a century later. Freud himself showed no discernible hesitancy in assigning a genre to his new invention. Right to the end, he described psychoanalysis as a natural science in the most categorical terms. Followers of Freud—and most of his critics—have not quarreled with the ascription of scientific status to his creation. I think, however, that a growing movement away from psychoanalysis-as-science can be discerned. If that estimate is correct, psychoanalysis will survive, but its identity will undergo a considerable change.

This essay will break a lance with those supporters and critics of Freud who take psychoanalysis to be a natural science of some sort. But I will find myself in agreement with the strictures they place upon psychoanalysis, while simultaneously protesting the identity of psychoanalysis as a straightforward and garden-variety empirical science. That will not be easy and it cannot be entirely successful. In the first place, Freud himself is not an easy protagonist. Those who take the word of the founder about the intellectual identification of the discipline he created are formidable contenders. And there is the fact that it seems necessary to review a few of the genuinely exciting contemporary perceptions of Freud that are beginning to surface in profusion these days. Different as these new Freudian (and anti-Freudian) voices are, uneven in quality as they are, together they testify to the liveliness of this nonagenarian theory. If Freud is alive and reasonably well today, on the road to recovery from any serious illnesses that his critics have diagnosed, it must be a Freud wearing a somewhat new guise: less the sober-visaged scientist and far more the conquistador that Freud once confessed to emulating.

One of Freud's most vigorous and wily critics, Professor

Adolph Grünbaum of the University of Pittsburgh, replies to an attacker (Flax, 1981) of his criticism of Freudian psychoanalysis as follows:

> What kind of knowledge do the leading advocates of psychoanalysis claim to offer? Throughout his career, Freud's answer was unequivocal: Psychology is one of the natural sciences. [Freud is quoted]: "I have always felt it a gross injustice that people have refused to treat psycho-analysis like any other science." (Grünbaum, 1983a, p. 46)

Professor Grünbaum goes on to quote several other equally categorical assertions of Freud's about the nature of the discipline he invented. And, as if that were not sufficient guarantee, he proceeds to cite the agreeing usage of the American Psychoanalytic Association. Any doubts about the official scientific status of psychoanalysis, Grünbaum convincingly demonstrates, are assuredly not shared by critics of his persuasion (for example, Eagle, 1983) nor by the accredited American representatives of Freudian theory and therapy. Finally, Freud is quoted from the *New Introductory Lectures* in order to wrap up the Grünbaum case:

> . . . the intellect and the mind are objects for scientific research in exactly the same way as any non-human things. Psycho-analysis has a special right to speak for the scientific *Weltanschauung*. . . . If the investigation of the intellectual and emotional functions of men (and of animals) is included in science, then it will be seen that . . . no new sources of knowledge or methods of research have come into being. (Grünbaum, 1983a, p. 46)

Grünbaum's case gives every indication of being airtight. If indeed psychoanalysis is a science, the clinical data offered by Freud and the theories that allegedly derive from it are rather poor science—just as Professor Grünbaum readily and in the densest detail demonstrates. Psychoanalysis appears to have been convicted of non-scientific status.

But an appeal is in order. Grünbaum, in the first place, is merely filling out and expanding the details of the *locus classicus* for the showing of psychoanalysis as non-scientific. That showing is the famous essay of Ernest Nagel's that, in reply to Heinz Hartman, quite convincingly negates the scientific pretensions of psychoanalysis (Nagel, 1959). Grünbaum is open to the observation not so much of having flogged a dead horse, but of beating up on the wrong animal. If the skepticism with which Grünbaum treats most of Freud's claims were extended to Freud's claim that his invention is a natural science, Grünbaum's attacks could turn out to be beside the point.

Grünbaum and other philosophers (e.g., Glymour, 1983) of the analytic persuasion are among the major new critics from "outside" psychoanalysis. That the very distinction of "inside" and "outside" is of such harrowing importance is an immediate tip-off that psychoanalysis is a peculiar "science." Janet Malcolm's two recent books (1981, 1984) are certainly among the best sources available for providing the flavor of the "ins" and the "outs" in the world of psychoanalytic practice and commentary. Malcolm herself, as Crews (1984) bitterly complains, is some kind of insider, though hardly the super-insider represented by a figure like Dr. Kurt Eissler, who looms so large in her book *In the Freud Archives* and in the lives of the chief characters in that book, Jeffrey Masson and Peter Swales.

To be "inside," in the terms of the psychoanalytic establishment, is, at the very least, to be analyzed. As Janet Malcolm says, those who have not been analyzed are asked to go away and come back, maybe, after they have become minimally credentialed. Crews finds such a request outrageous, while Malcolm is sympathetic. In fact she mentions an engaging analogy to the effect that one might just be better able to criticize Beethoven's music if one had given some effort to playing his sonatas on the piano. I doubt this canard is simply the psychoanalytic version of the artist's jibe to the critic who does not perform or the successful businessman's scorn for those who merely teach and do not do. The point being made is that psychoanalysis is not merely a set of abstract descriptive propositions but rather a set of therapeutic strategies which upend the patient's defenses and relieve him of the illness he has grown perversely to love. And that effect, if it is genuine, does not come across in a textbook. Yet, as Malcolm also points out, the Freudian corpus is on the other hand a large set of books which has been given to the world in general and not just to the anointed analyzed. So part of the alarms and accusations that still swirl around Freud and his invention are closely related to the status of the observer or the participant, as the case may be. Never has the hermeneutical circle been so suffocatingly relevant. Hardly anyone could credibly be an insider so devotedly as is Kurt Eissler. But hardly anyone could be so devoted an outsider as Frederick Crews—without, that is, having absorbed the zeal of the convert of negation.

What it comes down to is this. In order to assess the weight of some of the recent criticisms and defenses of the Freudian system, and of Freud himself, indeed it is essential to know what Freudian psychoanalysis *is*. If it is after all a science, as Nagel, Grünbaum, Eissler, Sulloway and other respected and respectable critics, philosophers, and historians say it is, one mode of critical approach is demanded and appropriate. If, on the contrary, Freudian psychoanalysis is not a science, as a few American outsiders, fewer insiders—like Louis Breger—and most Continental theorists presume, then a quite different mode of understanding of what Freud accomplished nearly a century ago is required. If Freud's very person and moral posture is as important to the nature of psychoanalysis as former "insiders" like Jeffrey Masson suppose or as super-outsider Peter Swales contends, then surely Freud relates to Freudianism in a mode that no one in his right mind would apply to Newton and Newtonianism.

I was introduced to some of the recent more off-beat critics of Freudianism through Janet Malcolm's highly interesting, gossipy pieces in *The New Yorker* relating her personal experience of psychoanalysis and psychoanalysts. Malcolm relies much more on her flair for dialogue and reportage than she does on critical exposition. A good deal of those essays' content have now appeared in the form of two books (Malcolm, 1981, 1984).

Malcolm's reportorial skills and the existence of two perfect subjects just happened to coincide. Jeffrey Masson and Peter Swales are two aficionados of psychoanalysis who present both similarities and differences in personality. Masson is a Harvard-educated Sanskritist who became qualified as a psychoanalyst at Toronto and managed to ingratiate himself in the most rarefied circles of the established psychoanalytic world. Though marked for extinction, while Masson's star shone it was a veritable nova. Swales is a Welshman of little formal education but lots of street-smarts who, after a considerable stint as a publicity person for rock-and-roll bands, became a full-time Freudian scholar. Swales turned up a good deal of interesting new information. He also has floated several plausible, though not necessarily true, new revisionist theories that Malcolm relates in a mode of ironic straightforwardness. These two roving scholars of psychoanalysis have something in common. As Malcolm presents them, they are both scoundrels of sorts, both very much focused upon themselves, the study of Freud serving as an instrument of self-advertisement and self-aggrandizement. But they come off as intelligent and even as modestly attractive scoundrels. Malcolm herself, while she packages her wares in a style of prose that is attractive enough to make this reader scan the Contents page of *The New Yorker* with some (usually disappointed) eagerness each week, has a very serious side. She finds people like Masson and Swales, who seem to be born and bred to exploit psychoanalysis and its vulnerabilities, to be dangerous adventurers. I think that the light touch and the gossipy dialogue are simply overlays for a serious engagement of the author with the subject of psychoanalysis. But for that conclusion her texts so far offer only fragmentary and occasional evidence.

It would be hard to know, were the choice available, whether to read Masson's *The Assault on Truth* first and then turn to Malcolm's indictment of its author, or the other way around. Either way, if you should find—as I did—that Malcolm is highly credible as a psychoanalytic reporter, you will end up with a considerable prejudice against Masson and his strange alter ego, Peter Swales. Reading Masson at the outset could carry one along all too easily on the flow of rhetoric, if not on the cogency of the argument. Best would probably be to have read Janet Malcolm's *New Yorker* pieces first. Then, while they are imperfectly remembered, one could read *The Assault on Truth.*

The one of Malcolm's little essays on psychoanalysis that particularly annoys Frederick Crews makes a very interesting point about the status of psychoanalysis. She makes a claim for a very special and utterly unique status, whose essence is that there are few exceptions to the rule that only the analyzed are able to grasp the essence of psychoanalysis sufficiently to engage in sensible discussion of its merits. Malcolm believes that the writings of the "outsiders" are "uncomprehending, naive, off the point, and biased." There are those with tin ears for the Freudian music and there are those, including the well-known former Freudians like Adler and Jung, who are "impervious" to the basic message of Freudian theory. Among those who are deaf to the true Freudian tune are the "present-day proponents of the seduction theory."

This is as close as Malcolm comes to a theoretical argument against the Masson thesis.

As for Crews, he professes to fear that the pro-Freudian advocacy in Malcolm's work will mislead the innocent seeking guidance from her pages. It is certainly true that Malcolm has suggested something close to a closed hermeneutical circle in her claim that only the analyzed can understand or knowledgeably criticize psychoanalytic theory. Then, as Crews seems to infer, if the unanalyzed dare criticize Freud in a way that threatens to undermine the system at its very base, they are taken to task as not having genuinely understood Freud or not having been well-enough analyzed.

However, if I am right, the emphasis of Janet Malcolm's book is not genuinely "damage control," the unflattering Washington/bureaucratic euphemism that Crews suggests. Her restrictions constitute an attempt to lay down certain elements of the Freudian system in opposition to those analysts who have misunderstood their very calling. I claim that the window-dressing of intellectual gossip is provided by Malcolm to serve as background for those extended *mot justes* or petite essays that occur infrequently throughout her books. And it is also Malcolm's opinion, illustrated by the high-level gossip that takes up most of the space in her book, that the inability to understand the true character of psychoanalysis is a recurrent phenomenon. Although she does not actually say so, she almost implies that in every generation of psychoanalysts we will find the same relationships played out between analysts and critics that were originally lived through by Freud and Jung or Freud and Stekel or Freud and Ferenczi. One assumes that we will also find those who, like Jones in his biography, will play the part of the *Defensor Fides*, of whom the foremost living example is Kurt Eissler.

After having made, or implied, this cautionary emphasis, the moral is, she says, obvious. Psychoanalysis is peculiarly vulnerable to the same kind of misunderstanding from within that is exemplified by the stuffed ears of such pseudo-Freudians as Jung, Adler, and Masson. Just as Anna Freud, Eissler, and others were duped for a time by the likes of Masson, so will Freudianism in the future have to guard itself against those who are attracted to Freud only to mindlessly soil their own nests. They must be purged from the establishment.

What is it that constitutes this fragile essence of psychoanalysis, the core of insight that is exempt from criticism—at least by outsiders—that must be protected from the depredations of critics who are kin to the selfish opportunism of Jeffrey Masson and Peter Swales? Malcolm's position is generated in bits and pieces in her two books and in the *New Yorker* article, *"Six Roses ou Cirrhose?,"* which is basically an essay review of Donald Spence's recent book (1982). While Malcolm spends considerable time criticizing Spence's ability to hear the real tune of Freudian psychoanalysis, it is clear enough, as always, that the critic has to have in the back of the book a real definition of the subject that is muffed by the object of the critique.

Malcolm makes the bold claim that the psychoanalytic interview is not really an archeological or historical session wherein the analyst leads the patient to reconstruct the actual history of his own childhood, in the sense of unearthing truths about the factual occurrences. Nor is the psychoanalytic encounter one in which the analyst and the patient use recollections to reconstruct something of a literary account that has an aesthetic character, as Spence says. Instead, psychoanalytic truth is "the truth of what the present betrays about the past." Thus what psychoanalysis is about might be surprising to Freud. It is about the patient's story, his personal myth of the "past" as it is transmitted, reluctantly, through the resistance. To call it his "story" probably misleads. For Malcolm stresses that it is not the narrative nicety, the cleverness of the reconstructive activity that counts, but rather the patient's giving himself away by reënacting, in the transference, what produced his illness in the first place. To put it otherwise, the analysis analyzes not the actual past, but the interstices and integuments of the "resistance" and the nature of the transference (the "transference-neurosis") which, on this account, cannot help but recapitulate and thus mimic the basic neurosis.

The classic analysis, when it works, according to Malcolm, is a painful and halting encounter that leads the analysand into ontological crisis. The patient is led to discover that his reality is shaped more by the persistent contributions of his emotions and less by the shared, objective world "out there." In fact, each (sick) person's reality is determined by the distorted personal myth that has been internalized as the result of a warping of the self in the course of growing up to adulthood. The eventual throwing-off of that personal set of defenses that have mated with the warps is as close to cure as Malcolm's definition of psychoanalysis gets. She has most of the reservations about the efficacy of therapy that are increasingly admitted by those who still follow Freud.

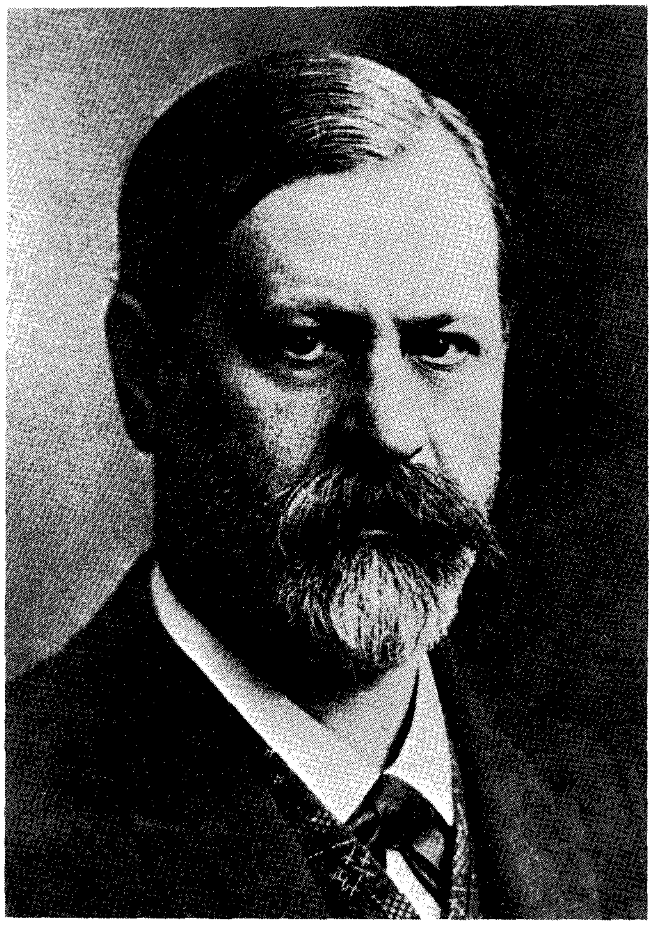
What analysis provides the patient at best is a life bereft of "story," of a well-ordered personal myth (read "defenses"). Analysis, thus, is a promising therapy only for those sturdy souls who can find the strength to live without the shelter of roseate self-deception. Not all can or should live with the lack of illusions Freud hoped would be the result of that "education for reality" proposed in *The Future of an Illusion*. This is one thing that Freud meant when he proclaimed that psychoanalysis has no need of any particular world-view or ethic beyond the scientific.

Besides believing that the analytic interview is really about a non-historical "past" which is no more than the present residues of a vanished past defensively dissolved, Malcolm finds further that the transference is another essential. Seeing the transference as Freud's "most original and radical discovery, more upsetting even than Oedipal relationships and the concept of infantile sexuality," she says "we cannot know each other." The transference means that the "most precious and inviolate of entities," personal relations, is actually a "messy jangle of misapprehensions, at best an uneasy truce between powerful solitary fantasy systems." Malcolm now says that, for psychoanalysis, we are shut up inside our personal psyches and that, prior to an analysis which painfully reveals that fact, we have erroneously supposed that we could appreciate the being of others for their own sakes without a pall of internal psychological cataract. As Malcolm puts the solipsistic impasse:

> We must grope around for each other through a dense thicket of absent others. We cannot see each other plain. A horrible kind of predestination hovers over each new attachment we form. "Only connect," E. M. Forster proposed. "Only we can't," the psychoanalyst knows. (1981, p. 6)

Then, if the transference is the paradigm of all relationships, as Freud attests, we adults are constantly and inescapably the victims of our childhood sexual fantasies and object-choices, continually putting a face on every "new" experience that merely recapitulates psychological growing-pains. Bringing this to consciousness, while it doesn't make us happy, does make us aware of the illusions. We are no longer susceptible to swallowing them whole and thereby prolonging illness. Can it be that all we ever see in one another is a *persona* composed of abandoned but still unconsciously present residues of familial object-choices—choices that are merely reawakened when someone "new" comes into view?

The final brief essay of Janet Malcolm's comes toward the latter part of *In the Freud Archives*. She begins by mentioning the newer work in object-relations theory



which goes back beyond the Oedipal phase to indict the quality of mother-parenting in the case of the borderline neurosis and psychosis. She points out, aptly enough, that these "Freudians" are actually down-playing the centrality of the Oedipus complex and placing more emphasis than most analysts upon the *actual* character of very early childhood existence. What is especially interesting here is her thesis that the critics of Freudianism and the Freudians are threatened by a developing *rapprochement* which neither sect intended or anticipated. Since classical psychoanalysis as a depth psychology was born with Freud's abandonment of the seduction theory and the consequent move away from a social psychology, there has been a tension between the two accounts of how neurotic illness is generated. The seduction theory is easier to understand. It is difficult to argue that the events of rape, violence, and incest performed on children have no later effect on the lives of those violated. Nor does Freud make any such denial (sometimes Masson makes it sound almost as if he did). As Malcolm puts it, Freud, having abandoned the seduction theory, asks us to believe that our illness is determined by "events we only imagined as small children—and, . . . we were unconscious, and remain unconscious, of having imagined" (Malcolm, 1984, p. 77). Freud was stung by Krafft-Ebing's characterization of Freud's paper on seduction theory as a "scientific fairy-tale." But it is a fair guess that Krafft-Ebing would have found an account of the etiology of neurosis stemming from the Oedipal fantasies of an unviolated youngster equally incredible. Analysts are becoming interested in patients that Freud would have considered improper for analysis, patients who have been the victims of "actual" and not fantasied mistreatment very early in life. Still, they do not hold, with Masson, that the seduction theory is true and ought to be reinstated.*

What is attractive about Malcolm's essays and books on Freud is not merely the enjoyment of psychoanalytic gossip (although she *is* a fine reporter), it is instead the sense that she can grasp and absorb all the criticism that the outside can offer while remaining in command of her inside version of the therapeutic essence of the cult. It may be that the outsider, including this author, will forever remain innocent of the shocking essence of psychoanalysis. It may even be that the world will be hornswoggled by the pettifoggery of narcissistic adventurers of the ilk of Masson and Swales. If that happens it will not be for want of Janet Malcolm's having clothed the message of warning in a really fetching wrapper.

Should you want to know who Jeffrey Masson is and how he got that way, I can only recommend that you read Janet Malcolm's book (1984). It would be a work of real supererogation to attempt a précis here. Suffice it to say that Masson is bright and bored, probably headed for early burn-out. Coming late to psychoanalysis, he had the capacity to win acceptance and, most importantly, the close friendship of the older analyst, Kurt Eissler. Through Eissler he became, eventually, the secretary of the Freud Archives, a treasure-house of documents and tapes on the history of Freud and psychoanalysis, to which Eissler holds the key. Malcolm tells the story, better than anyone else I know could have told it, of how Jeff Masson pursues his mini-tragedy from psychoanalytic preferment to deliberate isolation from the psychoanalytic establishment. His book, *The Assault on Truth*, aims to do one major thing: It aims to make it plausible that Freud abandoned his early seduction theory of the cause of neurosis in favor of the Oedipus complex because of a failure of nerve.

The structure of *The Assault on Truth* is straightforward. There are accounts of the chilly reception of Freud's 1896 paper on the etiology of hysteria before his colleagues of the Society for Psychiatry and Neurology; Freud's likely and probable experiences, literary and actual, of battered, sexually abused children; a recounting of the Emma Eckstein case and its connections with the Fliess affair; a chapter on the causal relation alleged between the Eckstein results and the renunciation of the seduction theory, then a short chapter which relates Masson's conclusions. Interpolated is a chapter on what Masson labels "The Strange Case of Ferenczi's Last Paper." Added are several appendices, one reprinting the 1896 paper of Freud's that is treated in the first chapter, another reprinting Ferenczi's paper that was dealt with in the interpolated chapter. Also included are some textual materials having to do with the Emma Eckstein affair that are interesting, but which seem to me not to add materially to the case that Masson thinks he has established against Freud.

If one sets aside everything in the book except the matter which bears directly on the sensational conclusion, that Freud was cowardly and dishonest to boot, Masson's conclusions are not compelling.

While the evidence is such that there is a likelihood that Freud and Fliess together mistreated, even abused, their hysterical patient, Emma Eckstein, there is no demonstration that this was in any way deliberate malpractice. Freud, emotionally dependent on Fliess, his judgment blurred with respect to Fliess's theories about the contribution of nasal bones to sexual dysfunctions, permitted physical lesions involving quite severe hemorrhages to be interpreted as having a psychological rather than a physiological background. The account provided by Masson, aided by some unpublished letters to Fliess, gives an unflattering portrait of Freud. Freud may well have (quite

---

*In an article in the December issue of *Mother Jones*, entitled "The Persecution & Expulsion of Jeffrey Masson as Performed by Members of the Freudian Establishment & Reported by Janet Malcolm of *The New Yorker*," Masson's interpretation of his troubles advances a new claim that his rejection is an instance of men in power choosing to ignore women's issues. And, in an earlier letter to *The New York Times Book Review*, Masson has angrily challenged the accuracy of Malcolm's reporting of his psychoanalytic career. Janet Malcolm has responded by offering to play the "forty or fifty hours" of interview tapes to prove her trustworthiness, and *Mother Jones* has proposed that, along with the *Times*, the two periodicals "agree on an authoritative and neutral third party who will listen to the tapes in their entirety and render a judgment of Masson's charges."

unconsciously) rationalized the abuse of Emma on the basis that her life-threatening bleeding was merely psychosomatic, "her own fault," based on fantasies of the past and of the transference. Thus Freud used the Eckstein case not only to exonerate Fliess of culpability for a botched job of surgery (and of an unlikely theory behind it), but also artificially to resolve the doubts about the genuineness of the stories of seductions related by patients in analysis.

Masson asks us to add to this motive for Freud's abandonment of the seduction theory a further motive. Freud, he claims, decided to identify with his opponents and put an end to his "isolation" by giving up the reality of seduction. Masson quotes Frank Sulloway (1979, p. 191) that Fliess had held the view of spontaneous-genetic infantile sexuality before Freud, that Freud had not adopted Fliess's views before he needed a substitute for the seduction theory, that he had somehow decided to give up as the result of a loss of nerve. Masson quotes Sulloway as holding that this take-over of the Fliessian view on the basis of infantile sexuality was the "triumph" of psychoanalysis. According to Masson, Sulloway, along with the majority of orthodox analysts, errs in this important judgment. Says Masson: "It was the beginning of its end" (p. 144). Of course, the disagreement between Sulloway and Masson on this point depends on the resolution of any doubts that may remain about the solidity of the Masson view that Freud lacked courage.

In this connection it is worth pausing a moment to examine more closely than Masson does in *The Assault on Truth* the analysis that Frank Sulloway presents concerning Freud's giving up the seduction theory.

According to Sulloway (1979, p. 206, *f.*), Freud did not "abruptly" abandon the seduction theory. Instead, in the letter that Masson quotes, Freud speaks of being "tortured with grave doubts" about "the great secret that has been slowly dawning on me in recent months." That "great secret" was simply the now solidified conviction that the confessions of seduction were not, in most instances, true. What Sulloway attempts is a reconstruction of the reasons for which Freud moved toward a spontaneous-genetic infantile sexuality.

What Freud said to Fliess in October of 1897 was that he (Freud) had discovered that "the psychical structures which in hysteria are subjected to repression are not properly speaking memories . . . but *impulses* deriving from the primal scenes." As Ernst Kris points out (Freud, 1954, p. 197), Freud has come very close to turning psychoanalytic theory inside out by inventing the id and its instincts—which will then form the basis for all subsequent psychoanalytic theory.

Now, says Sulloway, this same insight, roughly that infants harbor aggressive and erotic urges toward the appropriate parents founded on real or hallucinatory scenes of intercourse, was the needed theoretical supplement to resolve Freud's doubts about the reliability of his informants from the couch. Having seen that hysterical patients were defending against repressed instinctual impulses, he was close to inferring that the fantasies generated that had undergone repression and subsequent amnesia "could be just as 'psychically real' to the neurotic as reality itself" (Sulloway, 1979, p. 204).

Freud writes to Fliess as follows:

> I am learning the rules which govern the formation of these structures, *and the reasons why they are stronger than real memories*, and have thus learned new things about the characteristics of processes in the unconscious . . . (italics mine). (Freud, 1954, p. 212)

Now Frank Sulloway provides some of the background that deliberately moves Freud toward an instinct psychology and away from the simpler theory that hysterics suffer from the deferred consequences of trauma induced by seducers who take unfair advantage of innocent waifs.

Sulloway recounts four major concerns that led Freud away from the seduction theory: Lack of thoroughgoing therapeutic success with this assumption; the improbably high frequency of family perversions, including Freud's own sisters and brothers and Freud himself as "a mild hysteric"; the parity of "truth" and "fiction" for the unconscious mind; the impossibility of penetrating the patient's resistance sufficiently to reliably reconstruct actual childhood experience. That Freud changed his mind about the weight of the second and third reasons between the time of his 1896 essay and the letter to Fliess shows a certain ambivalence and uncertainty in the face of the confusing evidence of the consulting room. The wavering and change of mind hardly proves that Freud had given way to an easier route of peer acceptance. As Sulloway points out, finally, Freud had filled out the basic idea of depth psychology by a turn to psychobiological assumptions such as the upright posture, the abandonment of earlier erotogenic zones, organic repression, and the theory of bisexuality. As Sulloway puts it: "In short, by the end of 1897, psychoanalysis had become a psychology of the id" (1979, p. 207).

Of course, I am not wholly certain that Sulloway's fairly traditional and orthodox reconstruction of the circumstances surrounding Freud's abandonment of the seduction theory is absolutely accurate in every detail. It is certainly conceivable that when the Freud Archives are finally opened at the end of this century, some serious alterations will need to be made. But then, at times Masson is rather temperate and cautious in the claims he makes for his reconstruction of Freud's inner motives, as, for example, when he says at the end of the Introduction: "My pessimistic conclusions may possibly be wrong. The documents may in fact allow a very different reading" (1984, p. xxiii). So they may.

On the other hand, one has to juxtapose beside these modest disclaimers the report that Janet Malcolm provides of the effect that Masson hopes for, actually seems to predict, from the allegedly shocking revelations contained in *The Assault on Truth*:

> "I am persona non grata in the analytic world, a pariah," he said, with the air of one stating a mildy irksome and yet somehow not unamusing fact. He continued, with a rush of words, "Analysts won't speak to me anymore. They avoid me on the street. They are afraid to be seen with me. A year ago, they were fawning on me—they were giving me huge grants, they were inviting me to speak at their institutes. But

> when Anna Freud and Eissler dropped me no analyst would touch me. They see me as a dangerous person. They are terrified of my ideas. They are afraid I will destroy psychoanalysis—and they are right to be afraid. I have discovered that Freud wasn't honest. . . . when my book comes out there is not a patient in analysis who will not go to his analyst with the book in hand and say 'Why didn't you tell me this? I want an explanation. This man is telling me that there is something profoundly wrong at the core of psychoanalysis. Jesus Christ! If this is really true, what am I doing here?' " (Malcolm, 1984, p. 14)

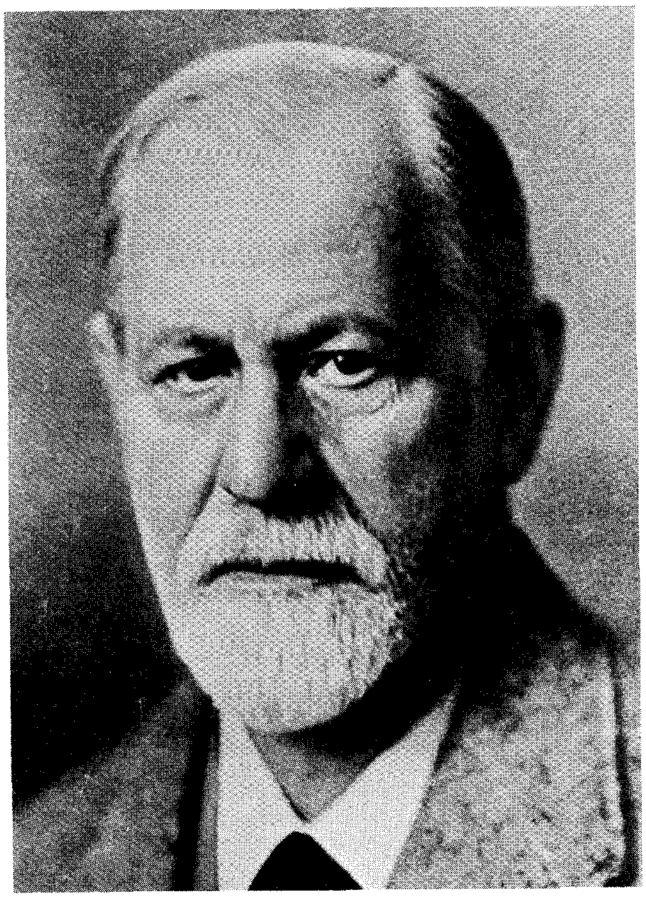
Assuming that Janet Malcom is a trustworthy reporter, I get the notion that Masson is really playing the "bad boy," the perpetual adolescent of psychoanalysis, and that the book is, if not unserious, something like *The National Enquirer* of the psychoanalytic world. There are some euphoric or manic delusions involved as well—again, assuming the accuracy of Malcolm's perception. Having read and devoted study time to *The Assault on Truth*, I find it impossible to believe that the analytic world will be seriously shaken up once this book is widely available. The cold shoulder turned by those who were formerly somewhat receptive seems, on the evidence, more a result of Masson's sophomoric social perversities than orthodox fears of the intellectual probity of Jeffrey Masson. What does come clear is Masson's own need to fail, to destroy himself, in what he would have to recognize as an Oedipal attack on Freud in the person of Eissler as a Freudian surrogate. One is driven to parlor interpretations, since the argument on its own merits is not that impressive.

Let us now piece that argument together. It is almost all contained in the Conclusion to *The Assault on Truth* (Masson, 1984, p. 188, *f.*). Masson begins oddly by agreeing with the psychoanalytic establishment one hundred percent:

> The new world that opened up to Freud with this "discovery" was a remarkable one and permitted him to make a large number of genuine discoveries that have retained their value over the years: the sexual and emotional passions of childhood, the reality of the unconscious, the nature of transference and resistance, repression, unconscious fantasies, the power of unconscious emotions, a need to repeat early sorrows, and so on.

Truly, at this stage of the Conclusion's argument, one would be tempted to see Masson holding the common view that Sulloway expressed and that was earlier summarized. The abandonment of seduction opened the door to Freudian depth psychology and a number of highly important insights. But wait.

The argument moves on in a different vein. Freud, in the light of the "new" or "unnoticed" facts brought out in *The Assault on Truth*, did not, after all, act mainly on the basis of theoretical concerns; he gave up seduction theory "because of a personal failure of courage" (1984, p. 189). But then the additional discoveries were merely the improbable good fortune that came to a person who sought for himself relief from professional isolation at the cost of truth and, in consequence, reaped the benefit of discovering psychoanalysis! That is about as unbelievably serendipitous a tale as one could ever hope to hear—let alone swallow whole. There is worse to come.



Coming right after the accusation of a "personal failure of courage" is this caveat: "I do not think that Freud *ever made a conscious decision* to ignore his earlier experiences or that he ever recognized what he did as a failure of courage" (italics mine) (1984, p. 189). If I read the account accurately, then, Masson tells us that Freud deceived himself in this whole matter. He thought he was wavering tortuously between seduction theory and fantasy and their associated theoretical implications and with the far from cut-and-dried evidence favoring the one and the other but, in actuality, he was thinking—unconsciously—that he could not put up with isolation much longer and would purchase respectability and acceptance by yielding on seduction. As Masson admits: " . . . he *believed* he was doing the right thing, and the difficult thing . . ." (italics mine) (1984, p. 189).

Masson should now have exonerated Freud.

The flaw is elementary. There is no such thing in the moral lexicon as unconscious courage or unconscious cowardice. If one is to be courageous, he must knowingly face a danger and, with some prudence, move to confront it because it is one's duty to do so. If one is to fail in one's duty to support, say, the known truth, with appropriate courage—in spite of the opinion of the whole world ranged against it—then one must, again, do so consciously. One must choose. And be praised or blamed. It is merely absurd to blame someone for doing what he could not help doing, in this case—as Masson claims—through being victimized by the unconscious.

It should take the wind out of the sails of Masson's blast against Freud if it is recognized that one must consciously and deliberately tell what one believes to be an untruth if one is to be judged dishonest. May I repeat that it makes no sense to refer to unconscious motivation and explicitly clear the accused of conscious intent while yet retaining, implicitly, the shock value attached to an accusation of dishonesty or cowardice? Freud is not thereby shown to be "innocent." The myth of Freud's personal courage and unswerving honesty is doubtless just that—a myth. Frank Sulloway (1979) has amply demonstrated and catalogued a large number of such myths about the person and the theories of Freud. But the fact that Freud is not the super-being, the sainted hero of psychoanalysis that fulfills his and certain others' needs for patriarchal blessing and curses, need not free us to traffic in self-contradictory literary kangaroo-courts. A lie is not necessarily an untruth, nor is an untruth necessarily a lie. Honest people don't tell falsehoods—but then, like the rest of us, they occasionally fail to tell the truth.

The basic accusations of the book are incoherent.

Almost as disappointing in Masson's book as the elementary logical error that cancels the effect of its sensational and accusatory character is the fact that it is purely a palace revolution. There is never a hint in the entire book that there might be an alternative to the Freudian way of analysis. The only question, as it appears to Masson, is who is right: the very early Freud of 1896, or the later Freud who developed depth psychology. About everything else, every other possible question, Masson shows himself to be vastly incurious. He digs out his information, acts out his masque, and shudders for fear boredom will overtake him in the midst of his labors. But then he sets up the book's culminating theme in the form: A or B; not B; therefore, A, where A is seduction and B is fantasy. It is so obviously the case that the initial disjunction could fail by neither alternative's being true that it should be hardly worth mentioning. Yet Masson seems blissfully unaware—or uncaring.

The one other point that *The Assault on Truth* wishes apparently to emphasize is one of compassion. Compassion for the children that have been victimized, compassion for those patients' sense of self-worth and identity, is abraded by having an analyst who repeats what an abusive parent has begun by refusing to believe in the actuality of the stories of sexual abuse. Freud himself, although his interest shifted to depth psychology and toward the kind of neurosis that could be treated by the psychoanalytic method, was doubtless aware of the reality of some sexual abuse and the likelihood that it would leave serious scars on the lives and pysches of those who were its victims. This is the area of psychiatric social work rather than of psychoanalysis proper. It is true that the boundaries of psychoanalysis are being extended and the definition of the field undergoing alteration by the inclusion of "borderline" patients, far more ill and quite differently ill than the classic Freudian patient. Still there is a division of discipline between the psychoanalyst and the social worker; there is not really a conflict as Masson makes it out. Insofar as there exist abuses of children in the family and in family-surrogate settings, as the media have revealed all too tellingly of late, then it is not in the interest of the psychoanalyst to prevent such attention from the appropriate helping professional. And I have not known such opposition to exist.

If one is seriously interested in the theoretical side of the causes that are efficacious in the etiology of classic neurotic symptomology, then psychoanalysts and their critics alike will have to take a page from Ernest Nagel's (1959) classic treatment of the "scientific" character of psychoanalysis. To make a decision between the incidence and the efficacy of seductive fantasies generated from infantile libidinal pressures and the incidence and efficacy of actual sexual abuse and violence by parents in the causation of neurosis, there will have to be some basic experimental evidence. That evidence will not be obtained from the psychoanalytic consulting room alone. It will be obtained in part from the domestic scene and the courtroom. A group that suffered from actual infantile sexual abuse would have to be compared with a group offering merely allegations of sexual abuse. Whether reliable laws could be found to link the occurrence of neurotic symptoms with the one or the other group would need to be investigated. Then the relative frequency of the occurrence of neurosis in the two instances would have to be charted. Even that would not suffice to make probable a causal relation. A control group would have to be established in order to make the causal argument credible (Nagel, 1959). But *The Assault on Truth* is not a book that soberly charts probabilities of causation.

If, as I aver, the charges that Masson brought against Freud have collapsed, that collapse does not bring us appreciably nearer the goal of identifying what psychoanalysis is. Until the problem is somehow addressed, and addressed more self-consciously and openly than Janet Malcolm permits in her work thus far, criticism of the Freudian undertaking rests within a frustrating dilemma. We must first know the proper shape of the subject before its shortcomings can be noticed. This psychoanalytic problem is not unlike the Socratic problem. Socrates recognized his ignorance was of a terrifying sort—only a tiny bit better than those poor souls who mistook their ignorance for knowledge. Socrates saw that one must know already the nature of knowledge in the very process of searching for it. If one does know, then the "search" is a put-on. If one doesn't, knowledge will be missed even if one should blunder upon it.

Freud was living in something like a practical form of that Socratic dilemma when he began to see that warm baths, hypnosis, the laying on of hands, plus stern suggestion to the patients either had unsatisfactory or ephemeral results in effecting a cure of the neurotic patients who came to him in pain. Not knowing quite what to do, and not knowing in advance the shape of the system that he would later construct, it would be hard to know where to look or how to label one's own creation.

The story of Freud's background in science, then in medicine, has been told often enough and it hardly needs retelling here. Suffice it to say that, according to Freud himself, his happiest days were spent in Ernst Brücke's laboratory, which he left to become a physician only because of financial pressure and also because of his desire to marry. Had Freud been the son of wealthy parents, there might have been no psychoanalysis, or at least no Freudian psychoanalysis. As it was, the young Freud was apparently "imprinted" for a lifetime with the scientific credo of his teacher, Ernst Brücke. Brücke's tough empiricism, in its turn, derived from the scientific school of Helmholtz, of which the chief characteristic was the ban on utilizing any theroretical entity that could not be reduced to matter and motion. The upshot is that while Freud was flying literally by the seat of his pants while attempting to treat patients who were hurting but without visible physiological deficit, he could scarcely face the fact that his therapeutic discoveries were not categorizable as "science" in the sense that his revered teacher understood that label. If that is a "fact," Freud *never* did face it. The *New Introductory Lectures* (1965, p. 158), written toward the end of his active contributions to psychoanalytic theory (or "metapsychology" as Freud spoke of it), are absolute and unyielding in their bland affirmation of the inclusion of psychoanalysis in the scientific *Weltanschauung* without any residue, question, or need for the slightest supplementation.

I have constantly been astonished at the very widespread acceptance of Freud's *obiter dicta* on the scientific character of psychoanalysis. American psychoanalysts by a large contemporary majority support Freud's serene confidence that psychoanalysis is science and nothing but science. While the American assurance has something to do with the American insistence that lay analysis is illegitimate and that only M.D.'s are permitted to matriculate at a psychoanalytic training institute, it is still remarkable that anyone could read the Freudian literature and emerge with the impression that psychoanalysis is plainly and flatly a scientific discipline in the same league with physics and chemistry. One has to suspect that this American sureness is an artifact of the remarkable homage paid to the founder of psychoanalysis, a reverential respect that I find, if only unconsciously, reinforced and reunderlined by the studied indifference to Freudian principles of some newer analysts. Of even more significance, perversely enough, is the size and studiousness of the books that in some sense "destroy" Freud, or at least destroy the myth or attack the scientific pretensions. It suggests that even some of the sternest critics of Freud are willing to place perfect trust in Freud's own judgment of the systematic character of his invention—psychoanalysis, the *science.* Those unwilling to trust Freud about anything else under the sun are quite supinely accepting of Freud's assurances that psychoanalysis is a natural science of a quite ordinary sort.

Freud's beginnings in psychoanalysis, before he knew what psychoanalysis was to become, along with his then friend and colleague Josef Breuer, set the tone for the method, at least the method of therapy right up until the end of Freud's life. What "Anna O." called "chimney sweeping," later the "talking cure" or the method of free association by the patient with an interpretation supplied by the doctor, never really changed even as the metapsychology that was (as was claimed) derived from it experienced severe modifications and outright overhauls and revisions. The formula was, and has remained, that the unconscious "memories" of past traumata were the repressed causes of neurotic symptoms in the present and that with the emergence of those painful recollections the symptoms would disappear, if not forever, at least for a reliably long time. The doctor (or the analyst) in encouraging the "free association" of the analytic hour presumably does not employ the technique of "suggestion," forcibly telling the patient that he is cured while evincing the authoritative posture of the knowing physician, but, rather, reconstructs and works through the resistance of the patient until what was formerly completely unconscious becomes, in some part, conscious. As the earlier references to the Masson argument that Freud was on the right track when he attributed these traumata to *actual* occasions of parental abuse show plainly enough, it is not easy, if the evidence is restricted to one-on-one encounters between the patient and the analyst in the private consulting room, to say whether the allegedly causative factors were actual or fantasied seductions. Then too, quite obviously, it is entirely possible that investigation (of the Nagel sort) would reveal that neither of these so-called competing causes were the scientifically probable causes. For it is always possible, at least, that the two alternatives that are offered by the earlier and the later Freud do not exhaust the range of possible, even plausible, causes of later neurosis or borderline psychosis. If one stays within the Freudian universe, however, these alternatives are not likely to surface. Freud has laid down the paradigm of psychoanalysis and both adherents and critics have a tendency to stay within the Freudian-defined territory rather than to view it afresh from the outside.

I believe that this tendency to accept Freud's assurances that psychoanalysis is an ordinary natural science has had the effect of blunting a number of the specific criticisms that Adolph Grünbaum and his associates bring to bear against the Freudians. A typical form of the criticism is to call attention to the wobbly Freudian claim that the clinical situation elicits a true account of early traumatic episodes that are alleged to be related causally to the observed neurotic symptoms. If analysis can unearth the actual—not merely the fancied—events of the historical past, then the analysis is deemed successful—implying further that the symptomatic remission is stable. It is enormously easy to show that the analyst is likely, given a patient both docile and needy, to suggest rather than to discover the shape of the patient's reconstruction of the past. Thus the results, as Grünbaum properly points out, are "epistemologically contaminated." Worse still, should the patient happen to recover, how can it be claimed that the reconstructed past events "tally" with the actual past? May it not be merely a case of *post hoc est non propter hoc*? Given its premises, the argument is effective. The key premise, however—the assumption of a commonsense, scientific naive realism together with a straightforward correspondence theory of truth—is non-psychoanalytic.

Psychoanalytic truth, as Janet Malcolm points out, is not the truth of an ordinary historical past. Psychoanalytic truth is the product of the working through of the resistances and of the analyzing of the transference, not the matching up of an independent set of statements or ideas with the independent reality to which they refer retrospectively. "Truth," in the psychoanalytic situation, like it or not, is part of an inner myth by which a person lives in his or her own world. This paradigm of truth, as such, would have been rejected by Freud, even though the insights he gained as a practicing psychoanalyst contradicted that rejection. This argument, it is plain, takes us beyond psychoanalysis and into the center of philosophical questions that divide official American psychoanalysis from most of the continentals, Paul Ricoeur's remarkable book on Freud being a bible of the difference.

The example of the Grünbaum analysis of the scientific deficits of the Freudian system illustrates a general point that has been debilitating and confusing for students and critics of psychoanalysis. These students and critics have had to come to their exposition of Freud with an already formed notion of Freud, a notion that is generally not without support from the texts, somewhere and to some extent. Even Freud himself has contributed to this stuffing with straw of his own imago by representing his development over time as if it were the progress of a scientific theory in some very ordinary sense.

The result of the incomplete and partial "Freuds" adduced by the supporters and the critics has been to produce a remarkable degree of confusion and acrimonious disagreement amongst Freudians and critics of Freud. Some of that disagreement, though not all, has to be attributed to the fact that those who construe Freud have brought different emphases and prejudgments to the task in the first place. The basic hermeneutical point is that several different "Freuds," none wholly false to the so-far documented sources, can be reconstructed and pitted against one another. Grünbaum, as we just saw—on the ground that Freud is exactly what he and the American Psychoanalytic Association say he is: a hard scientist—bases an extensive negative commentary on that identification.

The result, however, is less convincing the more longitudinally one views the Freudian career. Over a period of almost forty-five years and an oeuvre of twenty-four volumes, Freud developed a set of theories which is not a unified system in any sense that resembles "system" in the natural sciences. He develops and (partly) discards a number of less broad and generic paradigmatic concepts mated with some less ephemeral and basic paradigms—but—from the beginning to the end the style, flavor, and very mode of procedure show vast differences. One tendency, to illustrate my point, is the distancing of Freudian theory over time from the evidence of the consulting room. More and more, Freud, in pursuit of the philosophical knowledge that he had earlier in his career defended against, finds himself writing on broad speculative themes that are far more readily describable as "philosophical" than "scientific."

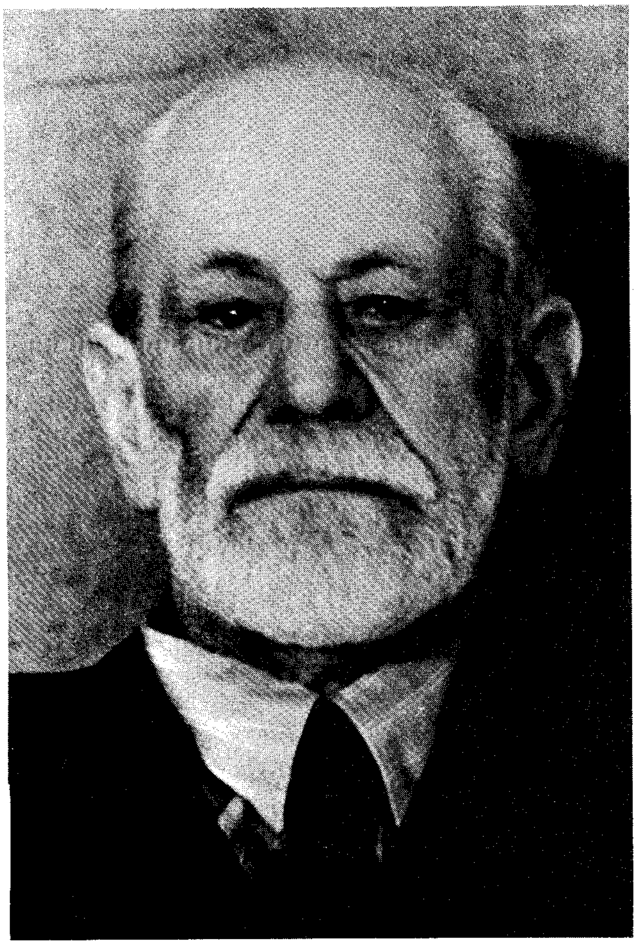
The key to Freud is seen in his Judaism and the resemblance of Freud's work to the commentaries of the rabbis. Or the center is seen in *The Project for a Scientific Psychology*, which, according to James Strachey, exerted a ghostly influence over all the remainder of the Freudian corpus. Or the Darwinian and Lamarckist biological bases affected not only the terminology but the basic conceptual structure of the Freudian theory. Or Freud is simply bringing together some of the emphases that he had read about in contemporary sexologists like Albert Moll. Or he was copying Janet and Bernheim. Or he was deliberately or partly unconsciously promulgating a myth of isolation, among others, that helped to provide a mystical unity for the keeping of the psychoanalytic faith over time. Or Freudian psychology is a kind of religion-substitute, with a patriarchal father-figure, true disciples and rebellious son-disciples, that play out the very pattern of Freudian analysis that the father of them all discovered.

Thus, the evidence is abundant that there is not a single "Freud." There are various "Freuds" to be subjected to analysis and the tendency has been to take a single characterization as being more capable of covering all of Freud than the particular choice has been realistically able to handle. I believe that is true of the typology of the natural science model. Of course, that model is not *wholly* inappropriate. The very earliest work of Freud (on the testicles of the eel) and the *Project* are fairly good fits for the natural science model of Freud characterization. *The Interpretation of Dreams* is not a work of natural science at all (with the possible exception of Chapter 7—the part-materialization of the ghost of the *Project*) but something far closer to a work of textual hermeneutics and linguistic analysis, not to mention its resemblance, in places, to a speculative metaphysics of the soul. I defy anyone to see in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* an essay in natural science; while almost impossible to categorize except as *sui generis*, it most resembles a work in dualistic cosmology, and therefore a species of philosophy. Later work such as *Totem and Taboo*, while having features of social anthropology, is also somewhat like a work of social philosophy; neither category applies comfortably and the combination of the two does not suffice either. There is a movement in Freud's work from *Naturwissenschaft* to *Geisteswissenschaft*, from work in the mode of natural science, to writing that has the trappings of a natural science, to work which is plainly nonscientific and partakes of the humanities. It is as if Freud found himself impelled from the hard science of the 17th century Galilean-Newtonian model to something which more and more resembled the Romantic nature philosophy of 19th century Germany. To force this variegated outpouring into the mold of straight science as understood by the philosophical analysts of this century demands an unusual willingness to ignore a good deal of the Freudian literature (the later books in particular) as not genuinely relevant.

The reasons for the support of the "natural science" character of psychoanalysis by the American Psychoanalytic Society (in marked contrast to continental psychoanalysis) is more complicated. I doubt that its alleged application is based on a careful study of the texts and their historical contexts. Rather, it has something to do with the status and prestige of the word, along with the status and prestige of the medical degree. And, by now, the official psychoanalytical establishment would be loath to backtrack even if evidence should appear that convincingly undermines the claim of Freudian psychoanalysis to genuine scientific status.

Among those who are insiders of the Freudian establishment, the recent book by Louis Breger (1981) stands out as more responsive to outsider critiques than the work of most of his peers. Yet he is faithful, at least in his fashion, to the Freudian center. In this respect he resembles Malcolm, with the difference, of course, that Malcolm writes as an intelligent, probably analyzed observer. Breger enjoys the status of a professor in the psychology department at the California Institute of Technology and also is on the faculty of the Southern California Psychoanalytic Institute. No renegade half-analyst of the stripe of Masson, no saucy autodidact of the Swales (1982-1983b) variety, Breger's work is impressive in its moderately revisionist outlook.

Exemplary of that moderation is the analysis Breger offers of the seduction theory and of its abandonment in the face of Freud's difficulty in accepting its implications. Far from finding the amazing revelations based on Freud's defects of character that Masson emphasizes, Breger sees that, with the turn to centrality of the Oedipus situation, psychoanalysis has recognized a "new reality," a reality in which the contribution of the psyche is given its tardy due. Breger is able to see that the implications of Freud's discovery of the id were only partly grasped by Freud himself. For Freud (as for Masson stuck in the Freudian groove), it was a matter either that the scenes of seduction were memories of actual events or were merely fantasies. Breger sees that the matter is not so simple or neat. The real "reality" is not a matter of the mind and its contents being "unreal" while the external, material world is straightforwardly "real." Instead, confusedly and messily, the real is the resultant of the intersection of the perception and the perceived without either being separable before or after their incorporation in a unified experience. It becomes impossible to capture and isolate the side of the perception from the side of the perceived, just as it becomes impossible to capture and isolate the side of the perceived from the side of the perception. One result, given the psychoanalytic notion of truth, is that the entire question of the seduction theory turns out not to be an answerable "question" within the psychoanalytic universe.



Freud went too far both in his original theory of seduction and in his rejection of seduction in favor of the fantasied and then forgotten wishes of the patient when an infant. Reality is a construct rather than a finished and given entity; when recollected and interpreted, the project (as in a psychoanalytic interview) is not an innocently reported recapitulation of a fantasy-free event but a response pervaded by the continuing fantasy life of the patient. What Freud discovered is that our perceptions of the world are constructs pervaded by affect, such that the simple dualism of his own attempted scientific worldview is completely undermined. The "education for reality" that he finds the appropriate replacement for the irrationality of religion (Freud, 1961b, p. 49) is one that touts a scientism forgetful of the very revolution in the nature of reality that his own abandonment of the seduction theory initiated. As Louis Breger remarks:

> From a nondualistic perspective we would say that neither sexual instinct nor reality exist apart from each other. Reality is a construction of the perceiver, including the reality of sexual instinct and experience. Sexual fantasies and impulses of the family-social milieu interact to shape a neurotic course of development. (1981, p. 54)

From this claim that Freud has actually entered the lists for reality as phenomenological rather than dualistic, Breger moves consistently on in the direction of indicting the Freudian metapsychology for its inherent dualism. The talk of cathexis and anticathexis of psychic "energy," its tensioning and its release, all conspired to treat the human being as a mechanical creature governed by a physically explicable pleasure principle that operates in the manner of a hydraulic pump. Pain is the damming up of sexual tension and pleasure its release. Breger believes that Freud has joined his mechanical model to the anti-sex ideas of his time, deriving a mode of energy conservation that is but a reflection of the sexual fears and anxieties generated by the middle-class family.

While Freud's psychological insight deepens as he proceeds with the work, the metapsychology is retained. But it is retained, Breger maintains, as a neurotic symptom. That is, it is an "unconscious memory" of the infantile period of the development of psychoanalysis that should be exorcised by—what else? Psychoanalysis. Breger is analyzing both Freud as a theorist and the theory that is marred by Freud's inability to see clearly enough the implications of his own insights. As he says, the metapsychology gives the appearance of "science" to psychoanalysis. It accomplishes the unconscious, neurotic aim of making psychoanalysis appear to be "politically safe." That is, it represents psychoanalysis as holding in check and quieting a disruptive sexuality by abstract and objective scientific means. While, as Breger sees it, psychoanalysis should really be about "the liberation of the individual from the crippling anxiety and guilt of the past" (1981, p. 68).

For Breger, some of the anomalies of the Freudian position stem from an unconscious duality in Freud's awareness of his own discoveries. Breger believes that Freud discovered that society victimized some of its most promising members, the neurotics, by exploiting and mistreating them, physically and psychologically, such that the conflicts of the unconscious are roughly the record of how the progress of victimization occurred. Seeing this, Freud could have become a revolutionary

Additional Bibliography

Cioffi, Frank (1970). "Freud and the Idea of a Pseudo-Science" in *Explanation in the Behavioural Sciences*. Cambridge: University Press, pp. 471-499.

Crews, Frederick (1980). "Analysis Terminable." *Commentary*, 70:25-34.

——— (1980a). Reply to Letters, *Commentary*, 70:18-22.

——— (1984). "The Freudian Way of Knowledge." *The New Criterion*, June 1984, pp. 7-25.

Eagle, Morris N. (1983). "The Epistemological Status of Recent Developments in Psychoanalytic Theory" in *Physics, Philosophy and Psychoanalysis: Essays in Honor of Adolf Grünbaum*. Dordrecht, Holland: D. Reidel, pp. 31-55.

Flax, Jane (1981). "Psychoanalysis and the Philosophy of Science: Critique or Resistance?" *The Journal of Philosophy*, 78:561-69.

Freud, Sigmund (1954). *The Origins of Psychoanalysis: Letters to Wilhelm Fliess, Drafts and Notes, 1887-1902*. New York: Basic Books.

——— (1961). *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. New York: W. W. Norton & Co.

——— (1961a). *Civilization and its Discontents*. New York: W. W. Norton & Co.

——— (1961b). *The Future of an Illusion*. New York: W. W. Norton & Co.

——— (1965). *New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*. New York: W. W. Norton & Co.

Glymour, Clark (1983). "The Theory of Your Dreams" in *Physics, Philosophy and Psychoanalysis: Essays in Honor of Adolf Grünbaum*. Dordrecht, Holland: D. Reidel, pp. 57-71.

Grünbaum, Adolf (1977). "How Scientific is Psychoanalysis?" in *Science and Psychotherapy*. New York: Haven, pp. 219-254.

——— (1979). "Epistemological Liabilities of the Clinical Appraisal of Psychoanalytic Theory." *Psychoanalysis and Contemporary Thought*, 2:451-526.

——— (1979a). "Is Freudian Psychoanalytic Theory Pseudo-Scientific by Karl Popper's Criterion of Demarcation?" *American Philosophical Quarterly*, 16:131-41.

——— (1983). "Freud's Theory: The Perspective of a Philosopher of Science." *Proceedings and Addresses of the American Philosophical Association*, 57:5-31.

——— (1983a). "Is Object-Relations Theory Better Founded than Orthodox Psychoanalysis?" *Journal of Philosophy*, 80:46-51.

——— (1983b). "Logical Foundations of Psychoanalytic Theory." *Erkenntnis*, 19:109-152.

Jones, Ernest (1953). *The Life and Work of Sigmund Freud: The Formative Years and the Great Discoveries, 1856-1900*. Vol. I. New York: Basic Books.

——— (1955). *The Life and Work of Sigmund Freud: Years of Maturity, 1901-1919*. Vol. II. New York: Basic Books.

——— (1957). *The Life and Work of Sigmund Freud: The Last Phase, 1919-1939*. Vol. III. New York: Basic Books.

Klein, George S. (1976). *Psychoanalytic Theory*. New York: International Universities Press.

Malcolm, Janet (1983). *"Six Roses ou Cirrhose?" New Yorker*, 58:96-106.

Medawar, Peter (1975). "Victims of Psychiatry." Rev. of *The Victim is Always the Same*, by I. S. Cooper. *The New York Review of Books*, 21:17.

Nagel, Ernest (1959). "Methodological Issues in Psychoanalytic Theory" in *Psychoanalysis, Scientific Method and Philosophy*. New York: New York University Press, pp. 38-56.

Ricoeur, Paul (1979). *Freud and Philosophy: An Essay on Interpretation*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Schafer, Roy (1976). *A New Language for Psychoanalysis*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Spence, Donald P. (1982). *Narrative Truth and Historical Truth: Meaning and Interpretation in Psychoanalysis*. New York/London: W. W. Norton & Co.

Sulloway, Frank J. (1979). *Freud, Biologist of the Mind: Beyond the Psychoanalytic Legend*. New York: Basic Books, Inc.

Swales, Peter J. (1982). "A Fascination with Witches." *The Sciences*, 22:21-25.

——— (1982a). *Freud, Fliess, and Fratricide: The Role of Fliess in Freud's Conception of Paranoia*. New York: Privately printed.

——— (1982b). *Freud, Johann Weier, and the Status of Seduction: The Role of the Witch in the Conception of Fantasy*. New York: Privately printed.

——— (1982c). "Freud, Minna Bernays, and the Conquest of Rome: New Light on the Origins of Psychoanalysis." *The New American Review*, Spring/Summer, 1982, pp. 1-23.

——— (1983). *Freud, Cocaine, and Sexual Chemistry: The Role of Cocaine in Freud's Conception of the Libido*. New York: Privately printed.

——— (1983a). *Freud, Krafft-Ebing, and the Witches: The Role of Krafft-Ebing in Freud's Flight into Fantasy*. New York: Privately printed.

——— (1983b). *Freud, Martha Bernays & the Language of Flowers*. New York: Privately printed.

Waelder, Robert (1962). Rev. of *Psychoanalysis, Scientific Method and Philosophy*, ed. S. Hook. *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association*. 10:617-637.

seeking the reform of a society that makes its members ineffectual and unhappy in its drive for civilization and progress rather than individual fulfillment. Or he could have covered his awareness with rationalizations that save the conventional forms. Freud did both, says Breger. He shows the terrifying costs of the perversions of the inner life which bring on helpless misery as the traumatized infant grows to adulthood. But Freud constructs at the same time a pseudo-scientific metapsychological structure that lays the blame on the persistence and ubiquity of the sexual instinct itself as selfishly responsible for an inability to yield itself to the requirements of civilized society.

Breger does not explicitly say so, but his analysis pushes toward the conclusion that Freud's work, as it progressed, generated unresolved contradictory stresses between its scientific and "safe" pretensions vis-à-vis its growing indictment of the bourgeois world that answered to Freud's social commonsense.

The careful reader of *Civilization and Its Discontents* (1961a) might guess that Freud was aware of the contradictions and the stresses in psychoanalysis, but that his defenses rendered such awareness only partly conscious. The dualism that Breger underscores as infecting the analytic view of reality is also apparent in Freud's schizoid split between acceptance of social reality and his occasional visions of radical alternates to the status quo.

The literature of psychoanalysis is confusing. It frustrates. Defeats. It is a pastiche of generally unacknowledged and disagreeing premises and postures that, when taken together, leave one reeling. Anyone who writes about it cannot help but adopt still another posture somehow to organize and interpret the outpour of critiques and alternate constructions. Except for those who are able serenely to maintain the faith as psychoanalytic "fundamentalists," the winds of doctrine are enough almost to blow the Freudians away.

Those who furnish forth the funeral baked meats for psychoanalysis proceed in a way that is strangely discordant against their dire pronouncements. They produce long, well-documented essays, even whole books, aimed at pinpointing the errors of psychoanalysis. Years of revisionist effort are devoted to demonstrating that the myths of Freud's total honesty and perfect courage are just that—myths. An obvious question emerges. Why spend so much life and time on the task of diagnosing the details of the terminal illness of such a rag-bag renegade and his ill-supported speculations? Admitting freely that the evidence must be forced a bit, I survey the Freudian field and find the reports of Freud's demise greatly exaggerated. Hence: Freud Redux.

To be sure, the recovery is spotty. Certain older images of Freud and Freudianism cannot be saved. Were survival to depend on fulfillment of the hard terms laid down by Freud himself and sworn and subscribed to by the original Committee (Jones, 1955, p. 93*f.*), the game is truly up. There was something of health as well as sickness in the religious dedication of the Committee and in Freud's magisterial acceptance of its devotion. The patriarch all too readily gave in to the notion of conservation and too eagerly forsook his role as conquistador. In its time, the defensive Committee managed to protect "the work" against shallow heretics who may have despoiled it before it could be thoroughly defined, but the compact of the faithful likewise helped to nourish the very malaise from which I believe I now see signs of recovery.

I see the signs in Janet Malcolm's sophisticated appreciation of psychoanalysis, in Roy Schafer's (1976) valiant attempt to find a less misleading vocabulary for psychoanalysis. I see it in the somewhat similar attempt of George Klein (1976) to retain the clinical strengths of psychoanalysis while jettisoning the burden of the metapsychology. Perhaps a shade perversely, I monitor those same signs in the Grünbaum/Breger destruction, from opposite venues, of the scientific credentials of psychoanalysis. These claims are now obsolete, of only historical interest. Finally, I see signs of emerging psychoanalytic health in the recognition, by establishment psychoanalysts, that claims for the singular curative powers of psychoanalysis (or any other particular therapy) are without credible empirical support.

The result is that I have come to believe that psychoanalysis is *sui generis*. Psychoanalysis is not natural science. It is not social science. It is not history or archaeology. Nor is it a close relative to biology, in spite of the prevalance of biological analogues. It also strikes me that the "outsider" critics of psychoanalysis have enjoyed all too much the exercise of taking psychoanalysis to the woodshed for a good old-fashioned spanking. Of course, the spanking is deserved only if the departure from rectitude was truly wicked—which I would deny. The spankings, deserved or not, have had the salubrious effect of helping to penetrate the fog of Freud's defensive self-deception about the nature of his psychological discoveries as well as shaking up the all too isolated redoubts of the psychoanalytic professionals.

Even Professor Grünbaum, that dean of anti-Freudians, if we take him at his word, seems to agree that Freudian psychology is left some saving grace. He says: "Despite the poverty of the clinical credentials, it may still turn out that Freud's brilliant theoretical imagination was actually quite serendipitous for psychopathology. . ." (1983, p. 27). In his "authorized" biography, Ernest Jones, attempting to capture ". . . the way Freud's mind worked," says:

> When he got hold of a simple but significant fact he would feel, and know that it was an example of something general or universal, and the idea of collecting statistics on the matter was quite alien to him. It is one of the things for which other, more humdrum, workers have reproached him, but nevertheless that is the way the mind of a genius works. (1953, p. 97)

I propose we take *both* Jones and Grünbaum at their word. I propose we accept what Michael Scriven says of the hypothetical character of Freudianism—but without upset at the fact that the merely hypothetical character has not altered much after nearly ninety years of opportunity. I propose we take Freud at his word when he said he was a conquistador, an adventurer in ideas.

Psychoanalysis is a set of impressionistically-organized *aperçus*. Otherwise, it is a melange of generalized insights and inspired guesswork that has some base in close observation and analysis but shows very little of the kind of basis that accredited scientific theories require. More of the insight that distinctively distinguishes psychoanalysis comes from introspective self-awareness empathetically directed to the internalized other. I believe there is more of this in psychoanalytic theory than is usually recognized or admitted. Freud's celebrated so-called "self-analysis" stands as a defining example of this type of "rhetorical evidence."

By the time of *The Interpretation of Dreams* Freud is telling a story, a story of the entities of the hitherto secret inner life and its relation to other human agents—and all from a genetic point of view. While the story emphasizes the role of sexuality and the at-first shocking developing sexuality of the young, the degree of that emphasis speaks not only of "biology," but of the degree of civilized repression of sex that Freud found to be characteristic of his time.

Both the instrument of discovery and what was discovered was the dominant role of the unconscious. In spite of the many predecessors of the discovery of the unconscious, Freud was first to give it a status and a description that, along with the Oedipus complex, set the teeth of the world on edge. The reconstruction of the "history" of the analysand by the analyst is a process of the empathetically-tuned unconscious of the one reading—through the defenses and while exploiting the transference—an accurate text of the pathology in the twisted myth of the other.

In this tortured and soul-wrenching process, most of the criticisms made by the outsider critics of psychoanalysis apply. Errors are certain to occur. Their correction, absent the conventions of the natural science tradition, is elusive and at times probably impossible. There remains the tendency for the work of the founder to retain the status of revealed truth. It threatens to be a replay of the old story. What began as fresh, radical insight gets institutionalized. Later those same insights function as barriers against needed revision. Save for the criticism of outsiders, psychoanalysis would be in even greater danger of precisely this institutional overripeness.

One of the staunchest critics of psychoanalysis precisely illustrates what I mean by renewal from the outside. Clark Glymour, who is of the Grünbaum persuasion, takes the same position I do about psychoanalysis as a set of organized non-scientific insights about the course of the inner life, but it sounds very different when he says it:

> *The Interpretation of Dreams* formed a turning point in Freud's life and work: half a rotation from scientist toward mountebank.

and

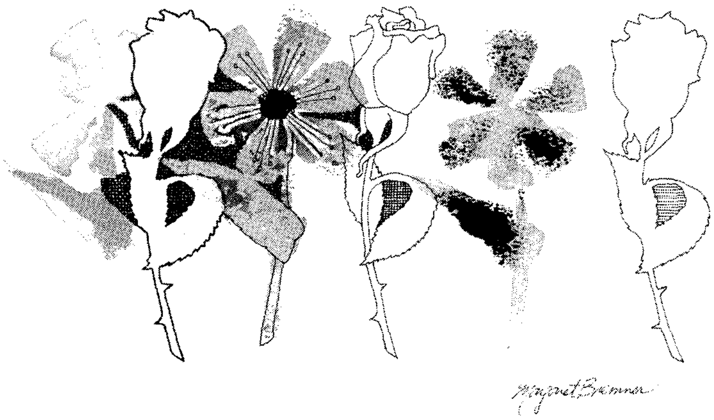
> I believe that the dream book represents a complex and unwholesome resolution of an intellectual crisis that beset Freud in the very last years of the decade.

Finally

> . . . he published *The Interpretation of Dreams* to justify by rhetorical devices the very methods he had every reason to distrust. (1983, p. 69; p. 70)

While obviously I cannot agree with Glymour that the resolution Freud reached in 1895 is "unwholesome," nevertheless, that realization, the realization that a mode of theory unlike the previous "hard" science approach had to be undertaken, marked the inception of psychoanalysis. Calling the justification "rhetorical" may go too far in suggesting that the evidence for psychoanalytic *aperçus* is merely verbal, still it is accurate in its (accusatory) implication that the relation between clinical example and theoretical generalization is quite inventive.

Freudianism is being turned "inside out" by its critics. In that process, Freudianism is being renewed. For all of that, it *may* turn out that Freudian psychology has taken on too much of the character of theological dogmatics, and thus the "renewal" will have a limited life-span. But should the spirit of Freud himself be recovered and the reverence for his shade subdued, the prognosis is much improved. Freud, while deserting science for introspective rhetoric, turned himself "inside out" more than once. From seduction theory to the Oedipal situation, from neurological science to psychoanalysis, Freud consistently showed the temper of the iconoclast. If the irreverence of the outside can be maintained, the insiders may be saved from the worst sins of idolatry. ☐



DABNEY STUART

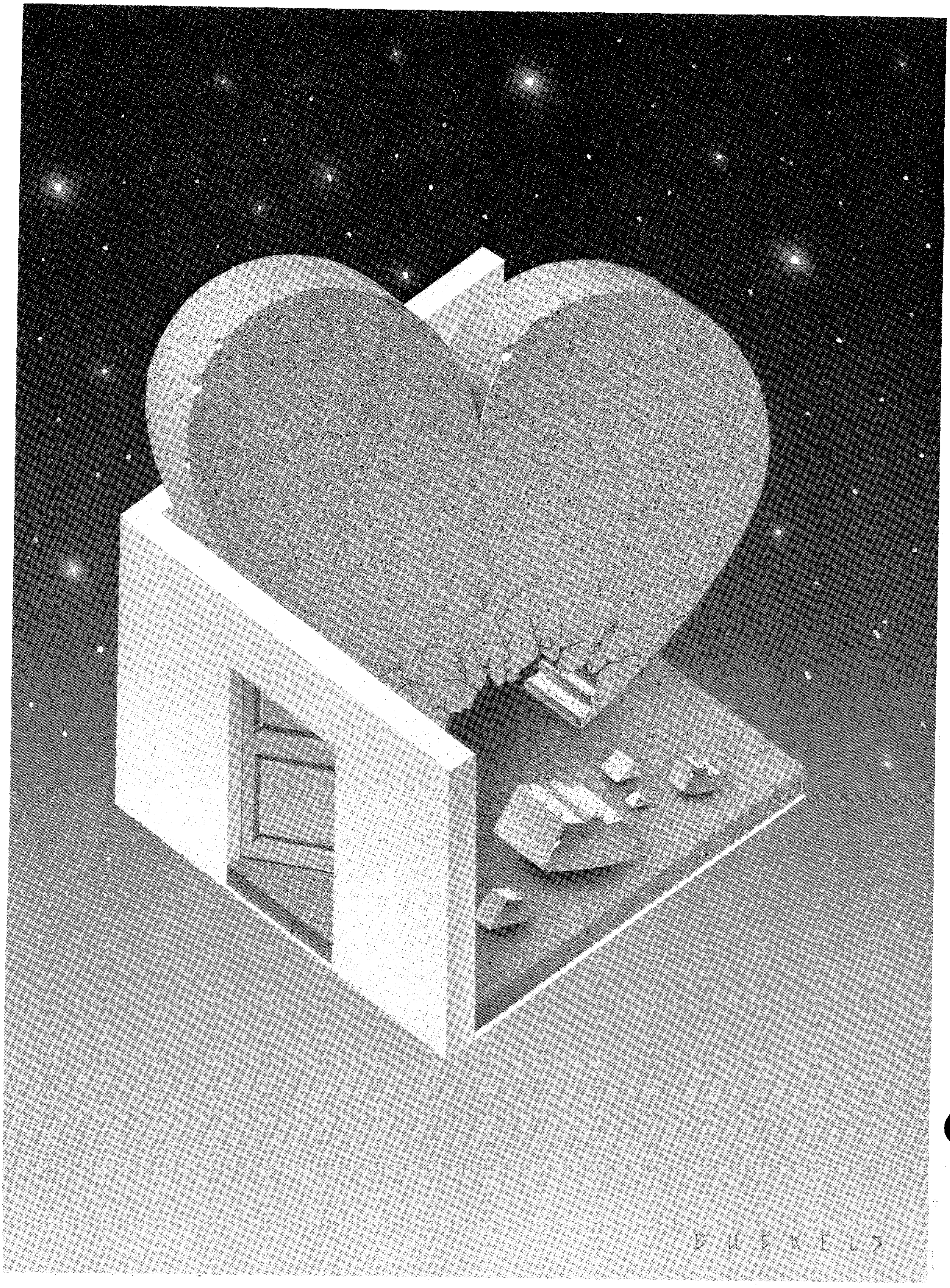
EX-WIFE

The woman reading in the bathtub
holds the book in one hand,
keeping her place with her finger,
her arm drooping along the porcelain
toward the floor. She wipes the tip
of her nose with her other wrist, then turns
the tap briefly, adding water.

She has no story to tell. She has told me
so. She has only this tableau she gives
me through a crack in the blinds.
I lay my binoculars on the window sill,
tip my head toward the bricks.
I don't know she will be dead in five years
but I wish I could help her. Hand her
the soap, take her riding in my tan car
by the river, meet her again coming
across the bridge on fire in her red scarf.

But it's been too long since she stepped
into the bathtub, leaving me
to scour the world for the book with two texts,
one lying transparently on the other
as if whispering to it,
opening secrets, filling the gaps.

Failure has brought me here. I lift the glasses
and look through the wrong end,
seeing her clearly
lean back in the bathtub, raise the book
and open it. Even at this distance,
she reads.


BUCKELS

BLUEBEARD'S EGG

MARGARET ATWOOD

Sally stands at the kitchen window, waiting for the sauce she's reducing to come to a simmer, looking out. Past the garage the lot sweeps downwards, into the ravine; it's a wilderness there, of bushes and branches and what Sally thinks of as vines. It was her idea to have a kind of terrace, built of old railroad ties, with wild flowers growing between them, but Edward says he likes it the way it is. There's a playhouse down at the bottom, near the fence; from here she can just see the roof. It has nothing to do with Edward's kids, in their earlier incarnations, before Sally's time; it's more ancient than that, and falling apart. Sally would like it cleared away. She thinks drunks sleep in it, the men who live under the bridges down there, who occasionally wander over the fence (which is broken down, from where they step on it) and up the hill, to emerge squinting like moles into the light of Sally's well-kept back lawn.

Off to the left is Ed, in his windbreaker; it's officially spring, Sally's blue scylla is in flower, but it's chilly for this time of year. Ed's windbreaker is an old one he won't throw out; it still says WILDCATS, relic of some team he was on in high school, an era so prehistoric Sally can barely imagine it; though picturing Ed at high school is not all that difficult. Girls would have had crushes on him, he would have been unconscious of it; things like that don't change. He's puttering around the rock garden now; some of the rocks stick out too far and are in danger of grazing the side of Sally's Peugeot, on its way to the garage, and he's moving them around. He likes doing things like that, puttering, humming to himself. He won't wear work gloves, though she keeps telling him he could squash his fingers.

Watching his bent back with its frayed, poignant lettering, Sally dissolves; which is not infrequent with her. *My darling Edward,* she thinks. *Edward Bear, of little brain. How I love you.* At times like this she feels very protective of him.

Sally knows for a fact that dumb blondes were loved, not because they were blondes, but because they were dumb. It was their helplessness and confusion that were so sexually attractive, once; not their hair. It wasn't false, the rush of tenderness men must have felt for such women. Sally understands it.

For it must be admitted: Sally is in love with Ed because of his stupidity, his monumental and almost energetic stupidity: energetic, because Ed's stupidity is not passive. He's no mere blockhead; you'd have to be working at it to be that stupid. Does it make Sally feel smug, or smarter than he is, or even smarter than she really is herself? No; on the contrary, it makes her humble. It fills her with wonder that the world can contain such marvels as Ed's colossal and endearing thickness. He is just so *stupid.* Every time he gives her another piece of evidence, another tile that she can glue into place in the vast mosaic of his stupidity she's continually piecing together, she wants to hug him, and often does; and he is so stupid he can never figure out what for.

Because Ed is so stupid he doesn't even know he's stupid. He's a child of luck, a third son who, armed with nothing but a certain feeble-minded amiability, manages to make it through the forest with all its witches and traps and pitfalls and end up with the princess, who is Sally, of course. It helps that he's handsome.

On good days she sees his stupidity as innocence, lamblike, shining with the light of (for instance) green daisied meadows in the sun. (When Sally starts thinking this way about Ed, in terms of the calendar art from the service-station washrooms of her childhood, dredging up images of a boy with curly golden hair, his arm thrown around the neck of an Irish setter—a notorious brainless beast, she reminds herself—she knows she is sliding over the edge, into a ghastly kind of sentimentality, and that she must stop at once, or Ed will vanish, to be replaced by a stuffed facsimile, useful for little else but an umbrella stand. Ed is a real person, with a lot more to him than these simplistic renditions allow for; which sometimes worries her.) On bad days though, she sees his stupidity as wilfulness, a subborn determination to shut things out. His obtuseness is a wall, within which he can go about his business, humming to himself, while Sally, locked outside, must hack her way through the brambles with hardly so much as a transparent raincoat between them and her skin.

Why did she choose him (or, to be precise, as she tries to be with herself and sometimes is even out loud, *hunt him down),* when it's clear to everyone she had other options? To Marylynn, who is her best though most recent friend, she's explained it by saying she was spoiled when young by reading too many Agatha Christie murder mysteries, of the kind in which the clever and witty heroine passes over the equally clever and witty first-lead male, who's helped solve the crime, in order to marry the second-lead male, the stupid one, the one who would have been arrested and condemned and executed if it hadn't been for her cleverness. Maybe this is how she sees Ed: if it weren't for her, his blundering too-many-thumbs kindness would get him into all sorts of quagmires, all sorts of sink-holes he'd never be able to get himself out of, and then he'd be done for.

"Sink-hole" and "quagmire" are not flattering ways of speaking about other women, but this is what is at the back of Sally's mind; specifically, Ed's two previous wives. Sally didn't exactly extricate him from their clutches. She's never even met the first one, who moved to the west coast fourteen years ago and sends Christmas cards, and the second one was middle-aged and already in the act of severing herself from Ed before Sally came along. (For Sally, "middle-aged" means anyone five years older than she is. It has always meant this. She applies it only to women, however. She doesn't think of Ed as middle-aged, although the gap between them is considerably more than five years.)

Ed doesn't know what happened with these marriages, what went wrong. His protestations of ignorance, his refusal to discuss the finer points, is frustrating to Sally, because she would like to hear the whole story. But it's also cause for anxiety: if he doesn't know what happened with the other two, maybe the same thing could be happening with her and he doesn't know about that, either. Stupidity like Ed's can be a health hazard, for other people. What if he wakes up one day and decides that she isn't the true bride after all, but the false one? Then she will be put into a barrel stuck full of nails and rolled downhill, endlessly, while he is sitting in yet another bridal bed, drinking champagne. She remembers the brand name, because she bought it herself. Champagne isn't the sort of finishing touch that would occur to Ed, though he enjoyed it enough at the time.

But outwardly Sally makes a joke of all this. "He doesn't *know*," she says to Marylynn, laughing a little, and they shake their heads. If it were them, they'd know, all right. Marylynn is in fact divorced, and she can list every single thing that went wrong, item by item. After doing this, she adds that her divorce was one of the best things that ever happened to her. "I was just a nothing before," she says. "It made me pull myself together."

Sally, looking across the kitchen table at Marylynn, has to agree that she is far from being a nothing now. She started out re-doing people's closets, and has worked that up into her own interior-design firm. She does the houses of the newly rich, those who lack ancestral furniture and the confidence to be shabby, and who wish their interiors to reflect a personal taste they do not in reality possess.

"What they want are mausoleums," Marylynn says, "or hotels," and she cheerfully supplies them. "Right down to the ash-trays. Imagine having someone else pick out your ash-trays for you."

By saying this, Marylynn lets Sally know that she's not including her in that category, though Sally did in fact hire her, at the very first, to help with a few details around the house. It was Marylynn who redesigned the wall of closets in the master bedroom and who found Sally's massive Chinese mahogany table, which cost her another seven hundred dollars to have stripped. But it turned out to be perfect, as Marylynn said it would. Now she's dug up a nineteenth-century keyhole desk, which both she and Sally know will be exactly right for the bay-windowed alcove off the living room. "Why do you need it?" Ed said in his puzzled way. "I thought you worked in your study." Sally admitted this, but said they could keep the telephone bills in it, which appeared to satisfy him. She knows exactly what she needs it for: she needs it to sit at, in something flowing, backlit by the morning sunlight, gracefully dashing off notes. She saw a 1940s advertisement for coffee like this once; and the husband was standing behind the chair, leaning over, with a worshipful expression on his face.

Marylynn is the kind of friend Sally does not have to explain any of this to, because it's assumed between them. Her intelligence is the kind Sally respects.

Marylynn is tall and elegant, and makes anything she is wearing seem fashionable. Her hair is prematurely grey and she leaves it that way. She goes in for loose blouses in cream-colored silk, and eccentric scarves gathered from interesting shops and odd corners of the world, thrown carelessly around her neck and over one shoulder. (Sally has tried this toss in the mirror, but it doesn't work.) Marylynn has a large collection of unusual shoes; she says they're unusual because her feet are so big, but Sally knows better. Sally, who used to think of herself as pretty enough and now thinks of herself as doing quite well for her age, envies Marylynn her bone structure, which will serve her well when the inevitable happens.

Whenever Marylynn is coming to dinner, as she is today—she's bring the desk, too—Sally takes especial care with her clothes and make-up. Marylynn, she knows, is her real audience for such things, since no changes she effects in herself seem to affect Ed one way or the other, or even to register with him. "You look fine to me," is all he says, no matter how she really looks. (But does she want him to see her more clearly, or not? Most likely not. If he did he would notice the incipient wrinkles, the small pouches of flesh that are not quite there yet, the network forming beneath her eyes. It's better as it is.)

Sally has repeated this remark of Ed's to Marylynn, adding that he said it the day the Jacuzzi overflowed because the smoke alarm went off, because an English muffin she was heating to eat in the bathtub got stuck in the toaster, and she had to spend an hour putting down newspaper and mopping up, and only had half an hour to dress for a dinner they were going to. "Really I looked like the wrath of God," said Sally. These days she finds herself repeating to Marylynn many of the things Ed says: the stupid things. Marylynn is the only one of Sally's friends she has confided in to this extent.

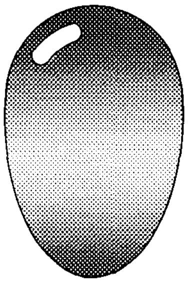
"Ed is cute as a button," Marylynn said. "In fact, he's just like a button: he's so bright and shiny. If he were mine, I'd get him bronzed and keep him on the mantelpiece."

Marylynn is even better than Sally at concocting formulations for Ed's particular brand of stupidity, which can irritate Sally: coming from herself, this sort of comment appears to her indulgent and loving, but from Marylynn it borders on the patronizing. So then she sticks up for Ed, who is by no means stupid about everything. When you narrow it down, there's only one area of life he's hopeless about. The rest of the time he's intelligent enough, some even say brilliant: otherwise, how could he be so successful?

Ed is a heart man, one of the best, and the irony of this is not lost on Sally: who could possibly know less about the workings of hearts, real hearts, the kind symbolized by red satin surrounded by lace and topped by pink bows, than Ed? Hearts with arrows in them. At the same time, the fact that he's a heart man is a large part of his allure. Women corner him on sofas, trap him in bay-windows at cocktail parties, mutter to him in confidential voices at dinner parties. They behave this way right in front of Sally, under her very nose, as if she's invisible, and Ed lets them do it. This would never happen if he were in banking or construction.

As it is, everywhere he goes he is beset by sirens. They want him to fix their hearts. Each of them seems to have a little something wrong—a murmur, a whisper. Or they faint a lot and want him to tell them why. This is always what the conversations are about, according to Ed, and Sally believes it. Once she'd wanted it herself, that mirage. What had she invented for him, in the beginning? A heavy heart, that beat too hard after meals. And he'd been so sweet, looking at her with those stunned brown eyes of his, as if her heart were the genuine topic, listening to her gravely as if he'd never heard any of this twaddle before, advising her to drink less coffee. And she'd felt such triumph, to have carried off her imposture, pried out of him that miniscule token of concern.

Thinking back on this incident makes her uneasy, now that she's seen her own performance repeated so many times, including the hand placed lightly on the heart, to call attention of course to the breasts. Some of these women have been within inches of getting Ed to put his head down on their chests, right there in Sally's living room. Watching all this out of the corners of her eyes while serving the liqueurs, Sally feels the Aztec rise within her. *Trouble with your heart? Get it removed,* she thinks. *Then you'll have no more problems.*



Sometimes Sally worries that she's a nothing, the way Marylynn was before she got a divorce and a job. But Sally isn't a nothing; therefore, she doesn't need a divorce to stop being one. And she's always had a job of some sort; in fact she has one now. Luckily Ed has no objection; he doesn't have much of an objection to anything she does.

Her job is supposed to be full-time, but in effect it's part-time, because Sally can take a lot of the work away and do it at home, and, as she says, with one arm tied behind her back. When Sally is being ornery, when she's playing the dull wife of a fascinating heart man—she does this with people she can't be bothered with—she says she works in a bank, nothing important. Then she watches their eyes dismiss her. When, on the other hand, she's trying to impress, she says she's in P.R. In reality she runs the in-house organ for a trust company, a medium-sized one. This is a thin magazine, nicely printed, which is supposed to make the employees feel that some of the boys are doing worthwhile things out there and are human beings as well. It's still the boys, though the few women in anything resembling key positions are wheeled out regularly, bloused and suited and smiling brightly, with what they hope will come across as confidence rather than aggression.

This is the latest in a string of such jobs Sally has held over the years: comfortable enough jobs that engage only half of her cogs and wheels, and that end up leading nowhere. Technically she's second-in-command: over her is a man who wasn't working out in management, but who couldn't be fired because his wife was related to the chairman of the board. He goes out for long alcoholic lunches and plays a lot of golf, and Sally runs the show. This man gets the official credit for everything Sally does right, but the senior executives in the company take Sally aside when no one is looking and tell her what a great gal she is and what a whiz she is at holding up her end.

The real pay-off for Sally, though, is that her boss provides her with an endless supply of anecdotes. She dines out on stories about his dim-wittedness and pomposity, his lobotomized suggestions about what the two of them should cook up for the magazine; *the organ,* as she says he always calls it. "He says we need some fresh blood to perk up the organ," Sally says, and the heart men grin at her. "He actually said that?" Talking like this about her boss would be reckless—you never know what might get back to him, with the world as small as it is—if Sally were afraid of losing her job, but she isn't. There's an unspoken agreement between her and this man: they both know that if she goes, he goes, because who else would put up with him? Sally might angle for his job, if she were stupid enough to disregard his family connections, if she coveted the trappings of power. But she's just fine where she is. Jokingly, she says she's reached her level of incompetence. She says she suffers from fear of success.

Her boss is white-haired, slender, and tanned, and looks like an English gin ad. Despite his vapidity he's outwardly distinguished, she allows him that. In truth she pampers him outrageously, indulges him, covers up for him at every turn, though she stops short of behaving like a secretary: she doesn't bring him coffee. They both have a secretary who does that anyway. The one time he made a pass at her, when he came in from lunch visibly reeling, Sally was kind about it.

Occasionally, though not often, Sally has to travel in connection with her job. She's sent off to places like Edmonton, where they have a branch. She interviews the boys at the middle and senior levels; they have lunch, and the boys talk about ups and downs in oil or the slump in the real-estate market. Then she gets taken on tours of shopping plazas under construction. It's always windy, and grit blows into her face. She comes back to home base and writes a piece on the youthfulness and vitality of the West.

She teases Ed, while she packs, saying she's going off for a rendezvous with a dashing financier or two. Ed isn't threatened; he tells her to enjoy herself, and she hugs him and tells him how much she will miss him. He's so dumb it doesn't occur to him she might not be joking. In point of fact, it would have been quite possible for Sally to have had an affair, or at least a one- or two-night stand, on several of these occasions: she knows when those chalk lines are being drawn, when she's being dared to step over them. But she isn't interested in having an affair with anyone but Ed.

She doesn't eat much on the planes; she doesn't like the food. But on the return trip, she invariably saves the pre-packaged parts of the meal, the cheese in its plastic wrap, the miniature chocolate bar, the bag of pretzels. She ferrets them away in her purse. She thinks of them as supplies, that she may need if she gets stuck in a strange airport, if they have to change course because of snow or fog, for instance. All kinds of things could happen, although they never have. When she gets home she takes the things from her purse and throws them out.

Outside the window Ed straightens up and wipes his earth-smeared hands down the sides of his pants. He begins to turn, and Sally moves back from the window so he won't see that she's watching. She doesn't like it to be too obvious. She shifts her attention to the sauce: it's in the second stage of a *sauce suprême*, which will make all the difference to the chicken. When Sally was learning this sauce, her cooking instructor quoted one of the great chefs, to the effect that the chicken was merely a canvas. He meant as in painting, but Sally, in an undertone to the woman next to her, turned it around. "Mine's canvas anyway, sauce or no sauce," or words to that effect.

Gourmet cooking was the third night course Sally has taken. At the moment she's on her fifth, which is called *Forms of Narrative Fiction*. It's half reading and half writing assignments—the instructor doesn't believe you can understand an art form without at least trying it yourself—and Sally purports to be enjoying it. She tells her friends she takes night courses to keep her brain from atrophying, and her friends find this amusing: whatever else may become of Sally's brain, they say, they don't see atrophying as an option. Sally knows better, but in any case there's always room for improvement. She may have begun taking the courses in the belief that this would make her more interesting to Ed, but she soon gave up on that idea: she appears to be neither more nor less interesting to Ed now than she was before.

Most of the food for tonight is already made. Sally tries to be well organized: the overflowing Jacuzzi was an aberration. The cold watercress soup with walnuts is chilling in the refrigerator, the chocolate mousse ditto. Ed, being Ed, prefers meatloaf to sweetbreads with pine nuts, butterscotch pudding made from a package to chestnut purée topped with whipped cream. (Sally burnt her fingers peeling the chestnuts. She couldn't do it the easy way and buy it tinned.) Sally says Ed's preference for this type of food comes from being pre-programmed by hospital cafeterias when he was younger: show him a burned sausage and a scoop of instant mashed potatoes and he salivates. So it's only for company that she can unfurl her *boeuf en daube* and her salmon *en papillote,* spread them forth to be savored and praised.

What she likes best about these dinners though is setting the table, deciding who will sit where and, when she's feeling mischievous, even what they are likely to say. Then she can sit and listen to them say it. Occasionally she prompts a little.

Tonight will not be very challenging, since it's only the heart men and their wives, and Marylynn, whom Sally hopes will dilute them. The heart men are forbidden to talk shop at Sally's dinner table, but they do it anyway. "Not what you really want to listen to while you're eating," says Sally. "All those tubes and valves." Privately she thinks they're a conceited lot, all except Ed. She can't resist needling them from time to time.

"I mean," she said to one of the leading surgeons, "basically it's just an exalted form of dress-making, don't you think?"

"Come again?" said the surgeon, smiling. The heart men think Sally is one hell of a tease.

"It's really just cutting and sewing, isn't it?" Sally murmured. The surgeon laughed.

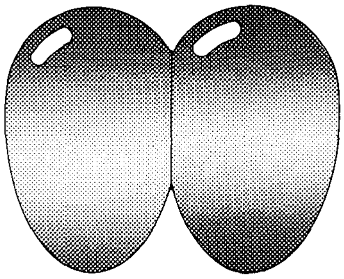
"There's more to it than that," Ed said, unexpectedly, solemnly.

"What more, Ed?" said the surgeon. "You could say there's a lot of embroidery, but that's in the billing." He chuckled at himself.

Sally held her breath. She could hear Ed's verbal thought processes lurching into gear. He was delectable.

"Good judgment," Ed said. His earnestness hit the table like a wet fish. The surgeon hastily downed his wine.

Sally smiled. This was supposed to be a reprimand to her, she knew, for not taking things seriously enough. *Oh, come on, Ed,* she could say. But she knows also, most of the time, when to keep her trap shut. She should have a light-up JOKE sign on her forehead, so Ed would be able to tell the difference.



The heart men do well. Most of them appear to be doing better than Ed, but that's only because they have, on the whole, more expensive tastes and fewer wives. Sally can calculate these things and she figures Ed is about par.

These days there's much talk about advanced technologies, which Sally tries to keep up on, since they interest Ed. A few years ago the heart men got themselves a new facility. Ed was so revved up that he told Sally about it, which was unusual for him. A week later Sally said she would drop by the hospital at the end of the day and pick Ed up and take him out for dinner; she didn't feel like cooking, she said. Really she wanted to check out the facility; she likes to check out anything that causes the line on Ed's excitement chart to move above level.

At first Ed said he was tired, that when the day came to an end he didn't want to prolong it. But Sally wheedled and was respectful, and finally Ed took her to see his new gizmo. It was in a cramped, darkened room with an examining table in it. The thing itself looked like a television screen hooked up to some complicated hardware. Ed said that they could wire a patient up and bounce sound waves off the heart and pick up the echoes, and they would get a picture on the screen, an actual picture, of the heart in motion. It was a thousand times better than an electrocardiogram, he said: they could see the faults, the thickenings and cloggings, much more clearly.

"Color?" said Sally.

"Black and white," said Ed.

Then Sally was possessed by a desire to see her own heart, in motion, in black and white, on the screen. At the dentist's she always wants to see the X-rays of her teeth, too, solid and glittering in her cloudy head. "Do it," she said, "I want to see how it works," and though this was the kind of thing Ed would ordinarily evade or tell her she was being silly about, he didn't need much persuading. He was fascinated by the thing himself, and he wanted to show it off.

He checked to make sure there was nobody real booked for the room. Then he told Sally to slip out of her clothes, the top half, brassière and all. He gave her a paper gown and turned his back modestly while she slipped it on, as if he didn't see her body every night of the week. He attached electrodes to her, the ankles and one wrist, and turned a switch and fiddled with the dials. Really a technician was supposed to do this, he told her, but he knew how to run the machine himself. He was good with small appliances.

Sally lay prone on the table, feeling strangely naked. "What do I do?" she said.

"Just lie there," said Ed. He came over to her and tore a hole in the paper gown, above her left breast. Then he started running a probe over her skin. It was wet and slippery and cold, and felt like the roller on a roll-on deodorant.

"There," he said, and Sally turned her head. On the screen was a large grey object, like a giant fig, paler in the middle, a dark line running down the center. The sides moved in and out; two wings fluttered in it, like an uncertain moth's.

"That's it?" said Sally dubiously. Her heart looked so insubstantial, like a bag of gelatin, something that would melt, fade, disintegrate, if you squeezed it even a little.

Ed moved the probe, and they looked at the heart from the bottom, then the top. Then he stopped the frame, then changed it from a positive to a negative image. Sally began to shiver.

"That's wonderful," she said. He seemed so distant, absorbed in his machine, taking the measure of her heart, which was beating over there all by itself, detached from her, exposed and under his control.

Ed unwired her and she put on her clothes again, neutrally, as if he were actually a doctor. Nevertheless this transaction, this whole room, was sexual in a way she didn't quite understand; it was clearly a dangerous place. It was like a massage parlor, only for women. Put a batch of women in there with Ed and they would never want to come out. They'd want to stay in there while he ran his probe over their wet skins and pointed out to them the defects of their beating hearts.

"Thank you," said Sally.

Sally hears the back door open and close. She feels Ed approaching, coming through the passages of the house towards her, like a small wind or a ball of static electricity. The hair stands up on her arms. Sometimes he makes her so happy she thinks she's about to burst; other times she thinks she's about to burst anyway.

He comes into the kitchen, and she pretends not to notice. He puts his arms around her from behind, kisses her on the neck. She leans back, pressing herself into him. What they should do now is to go into the bedroom (or even the living room, even the den) and make love, but it wouldn't occur to Ed to make love in the middle of the day. Sally often comes across articles in magazines about how to improve your sex life, which leave her feeling disappointed, or reminiscent: Ed is not Sally's first and only man. But she knows she shouldn't expect too much of Ed. If Ed were more experimental, more interested in variety, he would be a different kind of man altogether: slyer, more devious, more observant, harder to deal with.

As it is, Ed makes love in the same way, time after time, each movement following the others in an exact order. But it seems to satisfy him. Of course it satisfies him: you can always tell when men are satisfied. It's Sally who lies awake, afterwards, watching the pictures unroll across her closed eyes.

Sally steps away from Ed, smiles at him. "How did you make out with the women today?" she says.

"What women?" says Ed absently, going towards the sink. He knows what women.

"The ones out there, hiding in the forsythia," says Sally. "I counted at least ten. They were just waiting for a chance."

She teases him frequently about these troops of women, which follow him around everywhere, which are invisible to Ed but which she can see as plain as day.

"I bet they hang around outside the front door of the hospital," she will say, "just waiting till you come out. I bet they hide in the linen closets and jump out at you from behind, and then pretend to be lost so you'll take them by the short cut. It's the white coat that does it. None of those women can resist the white coats. They've been conditioned by Young Doctor Kildare."

"Don't be silly," says Ed today, with equanimity. Is he blushing, is he embarrassed? Sally examines his face closely, like a geologist with an aerial photograph, looking for telltale signs of mineral treasure: markings, bumps, hollows. Everything about Ed means something, though it's difficult at times to say what.

Now he's washing his hands at the sink, to get the earth off. In a minute he'll wipe them on the dish towel instead of using the hand towel the way he's supposed to. Is that complacency, in the back turned to her? Maybe there really are these hordes of women, even though she's made them up. Maybe they really do behave that way. His shoulders are slightly drawn up: is he shutting her out?

"I know what they want," she goes on. "They want to get into that little dark room of yours and climb up onto your table. They think you're delicious. They'll gobble you up. They'll chew you into tiny pieces. There won't be anything left of you at all, only a stethoscope and a couple of shoelaces."

Once Ed would have laughed at this, but today he doesn't. Maybe she's said it, or something like it, a few times too often. He smiles though, wipes his hands on the dish towel, peers into the fridge. He likes to snack.

"There's some cold roast beef," Sally says, baffled.

Sally takes the sauce off the stove and sets it aside for later: she'll do the last steps just before serving. It's only two-thirty. Ed has disappeared into the cellar, where Sally knows he will be safe for a while. She goes into her study, which used to be one of the kids' bedrooms, and sits down at her desk. The room has never been compeltely redecorated: there's still a bed in it, and a dressing table with a blue flowered flounce Sally helped pick out, long before the kids went off to university: "flew the coop," as Ed puts it.

Sally doesn't comment on the expression, though she would like to say that it wasn't the first coop they flew. Her house isn't even the real coop, since neither of the kids is hers. She'd hoped for a baby of her own when she married Ed, but she didn't want to force the issue. Ed didn't object to the idea, exactly, but he was neutral about it, and Sally got the feeling he'd had enough babies already. Anyway, the other two wives had babies, and look what happened to them. Since their actual fates have always been vague to Sally, she's free to imagine all kinds of things, from drug addiction to madness. Whatever it was resulted in Sally having to bring up their kids, at least from puberty onwards. The way it was presented by the first wife was that it was Ed's turn now. The second wife was more oblique: she said that the child wanted to spend some time with her father. Sally was left out of both these equations, as if the house wasn't a place she lived in, not really, so she couldn't be expected to have any opinion.

Considering everything, she hasn't done badly. She likes the kids and tries to be a friend to them, since she can hardly pretend to be a mother. She describes the three of them as having an easy relationship. Ed wasn't around much for the kids, but it's him they want approval from, not Sally; it's him they respect. Sally is more like a confederate, helping them get what they want from Ed.

When the kids were younger, Sally used to play Monopoly with them, up at the summer place in Muskoka Ed owned then but has since sold. Ed would play too, on his vacations and on the weekends when he could make it up. These games would all proceed along the same lines. Sally would have an initial run of luck and would buy up everything she had a chance at. She didn't care whether it was classy real estate, like Boardwalk or Park Place, or those dingy little houses on the other side of the tracks; she would even buy train stations, which the kids would pass over, preferring to save their cash reserves for better investments. Ed, on the other hand, would plod along, getting a little here, a little there. Then, when Sally was feeling flush, she would blow her money on next-to-useless luxuries such as the electric light company; and when the kids started to lose, as they invariably did, Sally would lend them money at cheap rates or trade them things of her own, at a loss. Why not? She could afford it.

Ed meanwhile would be hedging his bets, building up blocks of property, sticking houses and hotels on them. He preferred the middle range, respectable streets but not flashy. Sally would land on his spaces and have to shell out hard cash. Ed never offered deals, and never accepted them. He played a lone game, and won more often than not. Then Sally would feel thwarted. She would say she guessed she lacked the killer instinct; or she would say that for herself she didn't care, because after all it was only a game, but he ought to allow the kids to win, once in a while. Ed couldn't grasp the concept of allowing other people to win. He said it would be condescending towards the children, and anyway you couldn't arrange to have a dice game turn out the way you wanted it to, since it was partly a matter of chance. If it was chance, Sally would think, why were the games so similar to one another? At the end, there would be Ed, counting up his paper cash, sorting it out into piles of bills of varying denominations, and Sally, her vast holdings dwindled to a few shoddy blocks on Baltic Avenue, doomed to foreclosure: extravagant, generous, bankrupt.

On these nights, after the kids were asleep, Sally would have two or three more rye-and-gingers than were good for her. Ed would go to bed early—winning made him satisfied and drowsy—and Sally would ramble about the house or read the endings of murder mysteries she had already read once before, and finally she would slip into bed and wake Ed up and stroke him into arousal, seeking comfort.

Sally has almost forgotten these games. Right now the kids are receding, fading like old ink; Ed on the contrary looms larger and larger, the outlines around him darkening. He's constantly developing, like a Polaroid print, new colors emerging, but the result remains the same: Ed is a surface, one she has trouble getting beneath.

"Explore your inner world," said Sally's instructor in *Forms of Narrative Fiction,* a middle-aged woman of scant fame who goes in for astrology and the Tarot pack and writes short stories, which are not published in any of the magazines Sally reads. "Then there's your outer one," Sally said afterwards, to her friends. "For instance, she should really get something done about her hair." She made this trivial and mean remark because she's fed up with her inner world; she doesn't need to explore it. In her inner world is Ed, like a doll within a Russian wooden doll, and in Ed is Ed's inner world, which she can't get at.

She takes a crack at it anyway: Ed's inner world is a forest, which looks something like the bottom part of their ravine lot, but without the fence. He wanders around in there, among the trees, not heading in any special direction. Every once in a while he comes upon a strange-looking plant, a sickly plant choked with weeds and briars. Ed kneels, clears a space around it, does some pruning, a little skilful snipping and cutting, props it up. The plant revives, flushes with health, sends out a grateful red blossom. Ed continues on his way. Or it may be a conked-out squirrel, which he restores with a drop from his flask of magic elixir. At set intervals an angel appears, bringing him food. It's always meatloaf. That's fine with Ed, who hardly notices what he eats, but the angel is getting tired of being an angel. Now Sally begins thinking about the angel: why are its wings frayed and dingy grey around the edges, why is it looking so withered and frantic? This is where all Sally's attempts to explore Ed's inner world end up.

She knows she thinks about Ed too much. She knows she should stop. She knows she shouldn't ask, "Do you still love me?" in the plaintive tone that sets even her own teeth on edge. All it achieves is that Ed shakes his head, as if not understanding why she would ask this, and pats her hand. "Sally, Sally," he says, and everything proceeds as usual; except for the dread that seeps into things, the most ordinary things, such as rearranging the chairs and changing the burnt-out lightbulbs. But what is it she's afraid of? She has what they call everything: Ed, their wonderful house on a ravine lot, something she's always wanted. (But the hill is jungly, and the house is made of ice. It's held together only by Sally, who sits in the middle of it, working on a puzzle. The puzzle is Ed. If she should ever solve it, if she should ever fit the last cold splinter into place, the house will melt and flow away down the hill, and then. . . .) It's a bad habit, fooling around with her head this way. It does no good. She knows that if she could quit she'd be happier. She ought to be able to: she's given up smoking.

She needs to concentrate her attention on other things. This is the real reason for the night courses, which she picks almost at random, to coincide with the evenings Ed isn't in. He has meetings, he's on the boards of charities, he has trouble saying no. She runs the courses past herself, medieval history, cooking, anthropology, hoping her mind will snag on something; she's even taken a course in geology, which was fascinating, she told her friends, all that magma. That's just it: everything is fascinating, but nothing enters her. She's always a star pupil, she does well on the exams and impresses the teachers, for which she despises them. She is familiar with her brightness, her techniques; she's surprised other people are still taken in by them.

Forms of Narrative Fiction started out the same way. Sally was full of good ideas, brimming with helpful suggestions. The workshop part of it was anyway just like a committee meeting, and Sally knew how to run those, from behind, without seeming to run them: she'd done it lots of times at work. Bertha, the instructor, told Sally she had a vivid imagination and a lot of untapped creative energy. "No wonder she never gets anywhere, with a name like Bertha," Sally said, while having coffee afterwards with two of the other night-coursers. "It goes with her outfits, though." (Bertha sports the macramé look, with health-food sandals and bulky-knit sweaters and hand-weave skirts that don't do a thing for her square figure, and too many Mexican rings on her hands, which she doesn't wash often enough.) Bertha goes in for assignments, which she calls learning by doing. Sally likes assignments: she likes things that can be completed and then discarded, and for which she gets marks.

The first thing Bertha assigned was The Epic. They read *The Odyssey* (selected passages, in translation, with a plot summary of the rest); then they poked around in James Joyce's *Ulysses*, to see how Joyce had adapted the epic form to the modern-day novel. Bertha had them keep a Toronto notebook, in which they had to pick out various spots around town as the ports of call in *The Odyssey*, and say why they had chosen them. The notebooks were read out loud in class, and it was a scream to see who had chosen what for Hades. (The Mount Pleasant Cemetery, McDonald's, where, if you eat the forbidden food, you never get back to the land of the living, the University Club with its dead ancestral souls, and so forth.) Sally's was the hospital, of course; she had no difficulty with the trench filled with blood, and she put the ghosts in wheelchairs.

After that they did The Ballad, and read gruesome accounts of murders and betrayed love. Bertha played them tapes of wheezy old men singing traditionally, in the Doric mode, and assigned a newspaper scrapbook, in which you had to clip and paste up-to-the-minute equivalents. The *Sun* was the best newspaper for these. The fiction that turned out to go with this kind of plot was the kind Sally liked anyway, and she had no difficulty concocting a five-page murder mystery, complete with revenge.

But now they are on Folk Tales and the Oral Tradition, and Sally is having trouble. This time, Bertha wouldn't let them read anything. Instead she read to them, in a voice, Sally said, that was like a gravel truck and was not conducive to reverie. Since it was the Oral Tradition, they weren't even allowed to take notes; Bertha said the original hearers of these stories couldn't read, so the stories were memorized. "To recreate the atmosphere," said Bertha, "I should turn out the lights. These stories were always told at night." "To make them creepier?" someone offered. "No," said Bertha. "In the days, they worked." She didn't do that, though she did make them sit in a circle.

"You should have seen us," Sally said afterwards to Ed, "sitting in a circle, listening to fairy stories. It was just like kindergarten. Some of them even had their mouths open. I kept expecting her to say, 'If you need to go, put up your hand.'" She was meaning to be funny, to amuse Ed with this account of Bertha's eccentricity and the foolish appearance of the students, most of them middle-aged, sitting in a circle as if they had never grown up at all. She was also intending to belittle the course, just slightly. She always did this with her night courses, so Ed wouldn't get the idea there was anything in her life that was even remotely as important as he was. But Ed didn't seem to need this amusement or this belittlement. He took her information earnestly, gravely, as if Bertha's behavior was, after all, only the procedure of a specialist. No one knew better than he did that the procedures of specialists often looked bizarre or incomprehensible to onlookers. "She probably has her reasons," was all he would say.

The first stories Bertha read them, for warm-ups ("No memorizing for *her*," said Sally), were about princes who got amnesia and forgot about their true loves and married girls their mothers had picked out for them. Then they had to be rescued, with the aid of magic. The stories didn't say what happened to the women the princes had already married, though Sally wondered about it. Then Bertha read them another story, and this time they were supposed to remember the features that stood out for them and write a five-page transposition, set in the present and cast in the realistic mode. ("In other words," said Bertha, "no real magic.") They couldn't use the Universal Narrator, however: they had done that in their Ballad assignment. This time they had to choose a point of view. It could be the point of view of anyone or anything in the story, but they were limited to one only. The story she was about to read, she said, was a variant of the Bluebeard motif, much earlier than Perrault's sentimental rewriting of it. In Perrault, said Bertha, the girl has to be rescued by her brothers; but in the earlier version things were quite otherwise.

This is what Bertha read, as far as Sally can remember:

There were once three young sisters. One day a beggar with a large basket on his back came to the door and asked for some bread. The eldest sister brought him some, but no sooner had she touched him than she was compelled to jump into his basket, for the beggar was really a wizard in disguise. ("So much for United Appeal," Sally murmured. "She should have said, 'I gave at the office.'") The wizard carried her away to his house in the forest, which was large and richly furnished. "Here you will be happy with me, my darling," said the wizard, "for you will have everything your heart could desire."

This lasted for a few days. Then the wizard gave the girl an egg and a bunch of keys. "I must go away on a journey," he said, "and I am leaving the house in your charge. Preserve this egg for me, and carry it about with you everywhere; for a great misfortune will follow from its loss. The keys open every room in the house. You may go into each of them and enjoy what you find there, but do not go into the small room at the top of the house, on pain of death." The girl promised, and the wizard disappeared.

At first the girl contented herself with exploring the rooms, which contained many treasures. But finally her curiosity would not let her alone. She sought out the smallest key, and, with beating heart, opened the little door at the top of the house. Inside it was a large basin full of blood, within which were the bodies of many women, which had been cut to pieces; nearby were a chopping block and an axe. In her horror, she let go of the egg, which fell into the basin of blood. In vain did she try to wipe away the stain: every time she succeeded in removing it, back it would come.

The wizard returned, and in a stern voice asked for the egg and the keys. When he saw the egg, he knew at once she had disobeyed him and gone into the forbidden room. "Since you have gone into the room against my will," he said, "you shall go back into it against your own." Despite her pleas he threw her down, dragged her by the hair into the little room, hacked her into pieces and threw her body into the basin with the others.

Then he went for the second girl, who fared no better than her sister. But the third was clever and wily. As soon as the wizard had gone, she set the egg on a shelf, out of harm's way, and then went immediately and opened the forbidden door. Imagine her distress when she saw the cut-up bodies of her two beloved sisters; but she set the parts in order, and they joined together and her sisters stood up and moved, and were living and well. They embraced each other, and the third sister hid the other two in a cupboard.

When the wizard returned he at once asked for the egg. This time it was spotless. "You have passed the test," he said to the third sister. "You shall be my bride." ("And second prize," said Sally, to herself this time, "is *two* weeks in Niagara Falls.") The wizard no longer had any power over her, and had to do whatever she asked. There was more, about how the wizard met his comeuppance and was burned to death, but Sally already knew which features stood out for her.

At first she thought the most important thing in the story was the forbidden room. What would she put in the forbidden room, in her present-day realistic version? Certainly not chopped-up women. It wasn't that they were too unrealistic, but they were certainly too sick, as well as being too obvious. She wanted to do something more clever. She thought it might be a good idea to have the curious woman open the door and find nothing there at all, but after mulling it over she set this notion aside. It would leave her with the problem of why the wizard would have a forbidden room in which he kept nothing.

That was the way she was thinking right after she got the assignment, which was a full two weeks ago. So far she's written nothing. The great temptation is to cast herself in the role of the cunning heroine, but again it's too predictable. And Ed certainly isn't the wizard; he's nowhere near sinister enough. If Ed were the wizard, the room would contain a forest, some ailing plants and feeble squirrels, and Ed himself, fixing them up; but then, if it were Ed the room wouldn't even be locked, and there would be no story.

Now, as she sits at her desk, fiddling with her felt-tip pen, it comes to Sally that the intriguing thing about the story, the thing she should fasten on, is the egg. Why an egg? From the night course in Comparative Folklore she took four years ago, she remembers that the egg can be a fetility symbol, or a necessary object in African spells, or something the world hatched out of. Maybe in this story it's a symbol of virginity, and that is why the wizard requires it unbloodied. Women with dirty eggs get murdered, those with clean ones get married.

But this isn't useful either. The concept is outmoded. Sally doesn't see how she can transpose it into real life without making it ridiculous, unless she sets the story in, for instance, an immigrant Portuguese family, and what would she know about that?

Sally opens the drawer of her desk and hunts around in it for her nail file. As she's doing this, she gets the brilliant idea of writing the story from the point of view of the egg. Other people will do the other things: the clever girl, the wizard, the two blundering sisters, who weren't smart enough to lie, and who will have problems afterwards, because of the thin red lines running all over their bodies, from where their parts joined together. But no one will think of the egg. How does it feel, to be the innocent and passive cause of so much misfortune?

(Ed isn't the Bluebeard: Ed is the egg. Ed Egg, blank and pristine and lovely. Stupid, too. Boiled, probably. Sally smiles fondly.)

But how can there be a story from the egg's point of view, if the egg is so closed and unaware? Sally ponders this, doodling on her pad of lined paper. Then she resumes the search for her nail file. Already it's time to begin getting ready for her dinner party. She can sleep on the problem of the egg and finish the assignment tomorrow, which is Sunday. It's due on Monday, but Sally's mother used to say she was a whiz at getting things done at the last minute.

After painting her nails with *Nuit Magique,* Sally takes a bath, eating her habitual toasted English muffin while she lies in the tub. She begins to dress, dawdling; she has plenty of time. She hears Ed coming up out of the cellar; then she hears him in the bathroom, which he has entered from the hall door. Sally goes in through the other door, still in her slip. Ed is standing at the sink with his shirt off, shaving. On the weekends he leaves it until necessary, or until Sally tells him he's too scratchy.

Sally slides her hands around his waist, nuzzling against his naked back. He has very smooth skin, for a man. Sally smiles to herself: she can't stop thinking of him as an egg.

"Mmm," says Ed. It could be appreciation, or the answer to a question Sally hasn't asked and he hasn't heard, or just an acknowledgement that she's there.

"Don't you ever wonder what I think about?" Sally says. She's said this more than once, in bed or at the dinner table, after dessert. She stands behind him, watching the swaths the razor cuts in the white of his face, looking at her own face reflected in the mirror, just the eyes visible above his naked shoulder. Ed, lathered, is Assyrian, sterner than usual; or a frost-covered Arctic explorer: or demi-human, a white-bearded forest mutant. He scrapes away at himself, methodically destroying the illusion.

"But I already know what you think about," says Ed.

"How?" Sally says, taken aback.

"You're always telling me," Ed says, with what might be resignation or sadness; or maybe this is only a simple statement of fact.

Sally is relieved. If that's all he's going on, she's safe.

Marylynn arrives half an hour early, her pearl-colored Porsche leading two men in a delivery truck up the driveway. The men install the keyhole desk, while Marylynn supervises: it looks, in the alcove, exactly as Marylynn has said it would, and Sally is delighted. She sits at it to write the check. Then she and Marylynn go into the kitchen, where Sally is finishing up her sauce, and Sally pours them each a Kir. She's glad Marylynn is here: it will keep her from dithering, as she tends to do just before people arrive. Though it's only the heart men, she's still a bit nervous. Ed is more likely to notice when things are wrong than when they're exactly right.

Marylynn sits at the kitchen table, one arm draped over the chairback, her chin on the other hand; she's in soft grey, which makes her hair look silver, and Sally feels once again how banal it is to have ordinary dark hair like her own, however well-cut, however shiny. It's the confidence she envies, the negligence. Marylynn doesn't seem to be trying at all, ever.

"Guess what Ed said today?" Sally says.

Marylynn leans further forward. "What?" she says, with the eagerness of one joining in a familiar game.

"He said, 'Some of these femininists go too far,'" Sally reports. "'*Femininists.*' Isn't that sweet?"

Marylynn holds the pause too long, and Sally has a sudden awful thought: maybe Marylynn thinks she's showing off, about Ed. Marylynn has always said she's not ready for another marriage yet; still, Sally should watch herself, not rub her nose in it. But then Marylynn laughs indulgently, and Sally, relieved, joins in.

"Ed is unbelievable," says Marylynn. "You should pin his mittens to his sleeves when he goes out in the morning."

"He shouldn't be let out alone," says Sally.

"You should get him a seeing-eye dog," says Marylynn, "to bark at women."

"Why?" says Sally, still laughing but alert now, the cold beginning at the ends of her fingers. Maybe Marylynn knows something she doesn't; maybe the house is beginning to crumble, after all.

"Because he can't see them coming," says Marylynn. "That's what you're always telling me."

She sips her Kir; Sally stirs the sauce. "I bet he thinks I'm a femininist," says Marylynn.

"You?" says Sally. "Never." She would like to add that Ed has given no indication of thinking anything at all about Marylynn, but she doesn't. She doesn't want to take the risk of hurting her feelings.

The wives of the heart men admire Sally's sauce; the heart men talk shop, all except Walter Morly, who is good at by-passes. He's sitting beside Marylynn, and paying far too much attention to her for Sally's comfort. Mrs. Morly is at the other end of the table, not saying much of anything, which Marylynn appears not to notice. She keeps on talking to Walter about St. Lucia, where they've both been.

So after dinner, when Sally has herded them all into the living room for coffee and liqueurs, she takes Marylynn by the elbow. "Ed hasn't seen our desk yet," she says, "not up close. Take him away and give him your lecture on nineteenth-century antiques. Show him all the pigeon-holes. Ed loves pigeon-holes." Ed appears not to get this.

Marylynn knows exactly what Sally is up to. "Don't worry," she says, "I won't rape Dr. Morly; the poor creature would never survive the shock," but she allows herself to be shunted off to the side with Ed.

Sally moves from guest to guest, smiling, making sure everything is in order. Although she never looks directly, she's always conscious of Ed's presence in the room, any room; she perceives him as a shadow, a shape seen dimly at the edge of her field of vision, recognizable by the outline. She likes to know where he is, that's all. Some people are on their second cup of coffee. She walks towards the alcove: they must have finished with the desk by now.

But they haven't, they're still in there. Marylynn is bending forward, one hand on the veneer. Ed is standing too close to her, and as Sally comes up behind them she sees his left arm, held close to his side, the back of it pressed against Marylynn, her shimmering upper thigh, her ass to be exact. Marylynn does not move away.

It's a split second, and then Ed sees Sally and the hand is gone; there it is, on top of the desk, reaching for a liqueur glass.

"Marylynn needs more Tia Maria," he says. "I just told her that people who drink a little now and again live longer." His voice is even, his face is as level as ever, a flat plain with no signposts.

Marylynn laughs. "I once had a dentist who I swear drilled tiny holes in my teeth, so he could fix them later," she says.

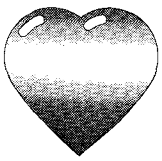
Sally sees Ed's hand outstretched towards her, holding the empty glass. She takes it, smiling, and turns away. There's a roaring sound at the back of her head; blackness appears around the edges of the picture she is seeing, like a television screen going dead. She walks into the kitchen and puts her cheek against the refrigerator and her arms around it, as far as they will go. She remains that way, hugging it; it hums steadily, with a sound like comfort. After a while she lets go of it and touches her hair, and walks back into the living room with the filled glass.

Marylynn is over by the french doors, talking with Walter Morly. Ed is standing by himself, in front of the fireplace, one arm on the mantelpiece, his left hand out of sight in his pocket.

Sally goes to Marylynn, hands her the glass. "Is that enough?" she says.

Marylynn is unchanged. "Thanks, Sally," she says, and goes on listening to Walter, who has dragged out his usual piece of mischief: some day, when they've perfected it, he says, all hearts will be plastic, and this will be a vast improvement on the current model. It's an obscure form of flirtation. Marylynn winks at Sally, to show that she knows he's tedious. Sally, after a pause, winks back.

She looks over at Ed, who is staring off into space, like a robot which has been parked and switched off. Now she isn't sure whether she really saw what she thought she saw. Even if she did, what does it mean? Maybe it's just that Ed, in a wayward intoxicated moment, put his hand on the nearest buttock, and Marylynn refrained from a shriek or a flinch out of good breeding or the desire not to offend him. Things like this have happened to Sally.



Or it could mean something more sinister: a familiarity between them, an understanding. If this is it, Sally has been wrong about Ed, for years, forever. Her version of Ed is not something she's perceived but something that's been perpetrated on her, by Ed himself, for reasons of his own. Possibly Ed is not stupid. Possibly he's enormously clever. She thinks of moment after moment when this cleverness, this cunning, would have shown itself if it were there, but didn't. She has watched him so carefully. She remembers playing Pick Up Sticks, with the kids, Ed's kids, years ago: how if you moved one stick in the tangle, even slightly, everything else moved also.

She won't say anything to him. She can't say anything: she can't afford to be wrong, or to be right either. She goes back into the kitchen and begins to scrape the plates. This is unlike her—usually she sticks right with the party until it's over—and after a while Ed wanders out. He stands silently, watching her. Sally concentrates on the scraping: dollops of *sauce suprême* slide into the plastic bag, shreds of lettuce, rice, congealed and lumpy. What is left of her afternoon.

"What are you doing out here?" Ed asks at last.

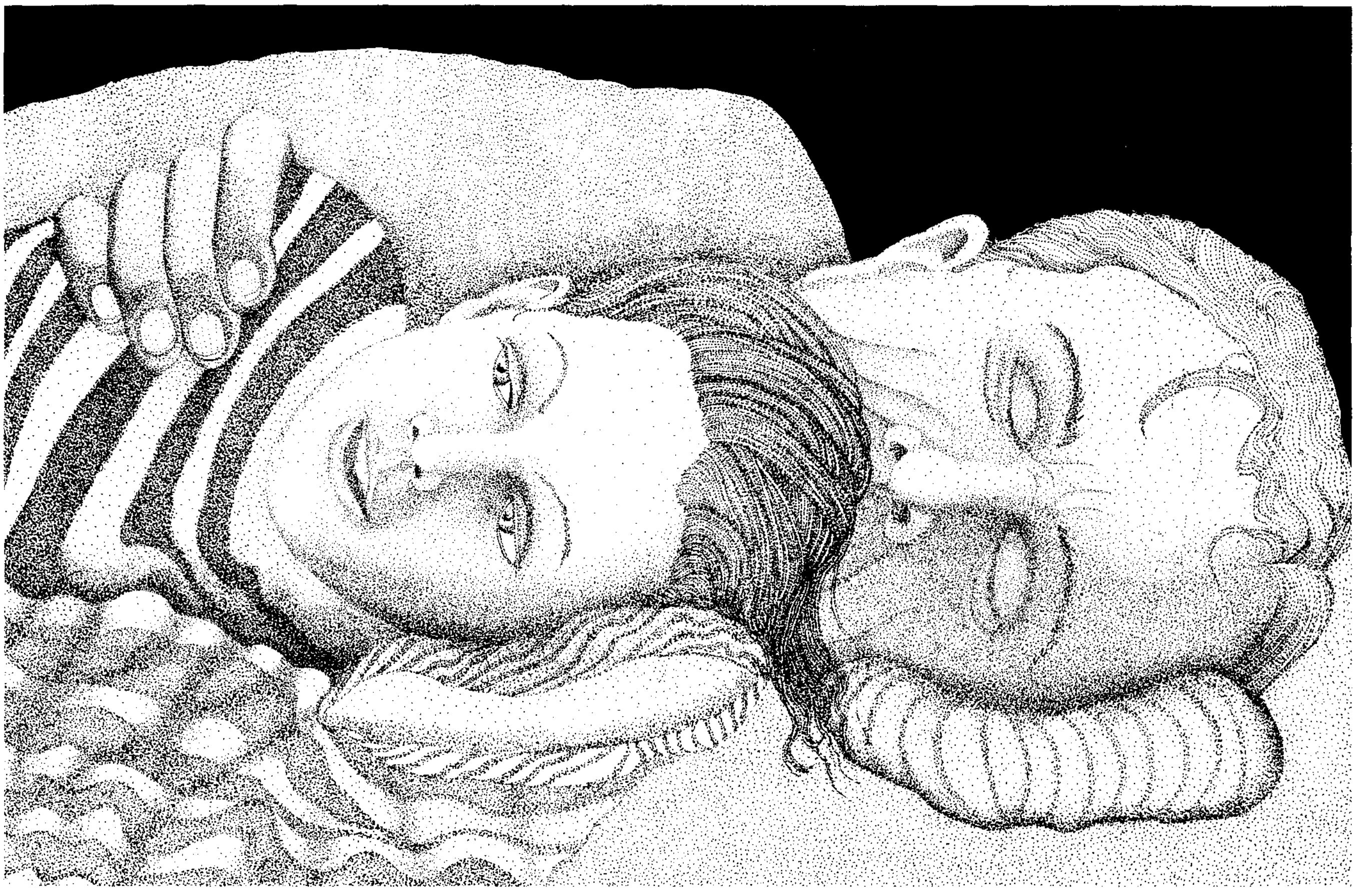
"Scraping the plates," Sally says, cheerful, neutral. "I just thought I'd get a head start on tidying up."

"Leave it," says Ed. "The woman can do that in the morning." That's how he refers to Mrs. Rudge, although she's been with them for three years now: *the woman*. And Mrs. Bird before her, as though they are interchangeable. This has never bothered Sally before. "Go on out there and have a good time."

Sally puts down the spatula, wipes her hands on the hand towel, puts her arms around him, holds on tighter than she should. Ed pats her shoulder. "What's up?" he says; then, "Sally, Sally." If she looks up, she will see him shaking his head a little, as if he doesn't know what to do about her. She doesn't look up.

Ed has gone to bed. Sally roams the house, fidgeting with the debris left by the party. She collects empty glasses, picks up peanuts from the rug. After a while she realizes that she's down on her knees, looking under a chair, and she's forgotten what for. She goes upstairs, creams off her make-up, does her teeth, undresses in the darkened bedroom and slides into bed beside Ed, who is breathing deeply as if asleep. *As if.*

Sally lies in bed with her eyes closed. What she sees is her own heart, in black and white, beating with that insubstantial moth-like flutter, a ghostly heart, torn out of her and floating in space, an animated valentine with no color. It will go on and on forever; she has no control over it. But now she's seeing the egg, which is not small and cold and white and inert but larger than a real egg and golden pink, resting in a nest of brambles, glowing softly as though there's something red and hot inside it. It's almost pulsing; Sally is afraid of it. As she looks it darkens: rose-red, crimson. This is something the story left out, Sally thinks: the egg is alive, and one day it will hatch. But what will come out of it? ☐



A VISIT

PATRICIA O'DONNELL

Lee took after her father, after the Jacobsons; emotional, imaginative, "head in the clouds," her mother would say. "Lee, stop daydreaming and help set the table." After several repetitions of this Lee would stop daydreaming and help set the table. Her father, meanwhile, reading a book in the easy chair, would look at Lee through thick glasses and say nothing. He understood too well.

Lee had imaginary friends as a child, two or three who remained with her for years. As they grew older they lost touch, as happens between friends. When she moved away from home to go to college she had a brief renewal of the friendship with one Colette, who slept with her for several nights in the unfamiliar dorm room. Lee knew by now, of course, that Colette was not real, but the memory of a close friend, always available, comforted her. More than anything she missed her father, and cried one night for hours at the thought that now she was grown up and would never live with him again, never be his little girl. Sometimes it irritated her, his way of speaking to her and cuddling her as if she were a child, but it had made her feel precious and special nonetheless, and she was pleased through her protests. She was aware for the first time of the sadness of time, and of growth; that it was constantly leaving parts of herself behind.

In Lee's second year at the university she learned that her parents were divorcing, and her mother was moving back to the east coast where she was raised. This news brought to Lee a surge of interest in her mother. She suddenly wanted to get to know her better, feared she would no longer have the chance. She went home the weekend before her mother was to leave. They sat up late, drinking and talking. The reasons for the divorce were simple, could in fact be summed up in two words: other women. She said there had been affairs all through the years Lee was in high school, even earlier. Lee had known nothing of this. The latest one was a young woman barely older than Lee herself. Her mother shook her head grimly, pouring herself another glass of brandy. Lee felt an affection for this person that she had not felt before. Her mother had never seemed so real. She thought with a pang of her father: Daddy—the tall hero who had taken them on picnics in the country, leading the way unafraid down overgrown lanes; the one who could be counted on to right all wrongs. Lee suddenly understood the phrase "seamy side of life." It was as if her life were a garment, neat and beautifully tailored, that had been turned inside out, with its seams, frayed edges and patching, its fragile construction all displayed.

The house was sold and Lee's father took an apartment in town. They talked over the phone, but it was some time before Lee could bring herself to visit him. It would be strange, having an unmarried father. Almost as if he wasn't a father at all. Yet she knew it must be as difficult for her father, in his way, as it was for her mother.

She arrived at his door one Friday evening, a bottle of wine in one hand and a wrapped gift in the other. It was a housewarming present: a small china elephant. She had taken the bus from the nearby town where she went to school and walked to his apartment. She thought she would probably stay the night.

The apartment was the second floor of a large house, old but in good condition. Her father threw open the door and gave her a hug. She realized she had missed him. "Hi, Daddy." "My baby!" He held her at arm's length, looking at her. She thought he had probably been drinking; his eyes seemed a little moist. Embarrassed, she held out the wine and gift. He seemed overcome: "Why, honey, you didn't have to do that." "I just wanted you to know I was thinking of you," Lee said. "You didn't have to do that," he said again, and Lee realized with alarm that he had to have been drinking; must be quite drunk, for he was crying, holding the still-wrapped gift up to his face as if it could catch the tears. Lee reached over to touch his shoulder, feeling uncomfortably that the gesture wasn't right, but not knowing what else to do. He seemed to calm down, and shook his head. "God, I'm sorry," he said. "I didn't mean to carry on like this . . . I'm fine, really." Lee said, "It's all right, Dad." They sat on the couch, the one that used to sit in their family room. Her father was able to look at her now, his eyes red-rimmed behind the thick glasses, his gray hair falling onto his forehead. "That's a helluva note. I'm supposed to be comforting you while you cry on *my* shoulder, not the other way around." Lee smiled, and reached for the bottle of wine. "I'll find a corkscrew and open this."

She was glad to be alone in the kitchen, rummaging around for a corkscrew, and thought her father was probably just as glad to be alone in the living room. She heard him sigh, and through the doorway saw him lean his head on the back of the couch. She found a corkscrew, and two wine glasses. She carried them in one hand and the wine in the other into the living room. "Why don't you open the present," she said. "Oh sure, sure." His voice had a rather false heartiness, and though he praised the elephant, placing it on the coffee table and saying it was the most valuable thing in the apartment (himself included, he joked), she felt he was trying to cheer her up. His hand was unsteady as he reached for the glass. He drank it too quickly, and poured himself another.

Lee began to feel more relaxed, and thought her father was, too. She said, "I'm sorry I didn't make it over sooner. School has been really tough." He shook his head. "It's okay, sweetheart. I know you've been busy." He rested a hand on her knee. "And it's such a god-awful mess, I'm not surprised you didn't feel like coming." Lee said, carefully, "It's not such a mess, is it? You're getting a divorce. Lots of people do that." He took his hand away and slapped his leg. "But this girl! She's so young! I love her, Lee, I really do." He looked at Lee almost beseechingly, she thought, as if looking for approval. She felt extremely uncomfortable. It was all wrong; surely he could see that. Not the affair but him, the way he was acting, talking to her. She felt as if some part of him must see how wrong it was; the part that used to take Lee to mass on Sunday mornings, that used to order each young man who took her out to take her only to family movies, and be home by midnight. Now he said, "Listen—do you want to see a picture of her?" He pulled his wallet out and flipped it open to a picture of a pretty young woman. She had long dark hair, and something about her made Lee feel as if she were looking at herself. She only said, however, that she thought the girl was pretty.

As if he suddenly remembered, her father said, "And your mother. I love her, too. She's a good woman, you know, Lee, she really is." "Yes," Lee said. "And she still loves you, too," although she had no idea if that was true. There was a silence, during which they both sipped wine. Finally Lee's father said "She put up with hell from me." His voice was emotional, almost trembling; Lee was afraid he was going to begin crying again. She jumped up to turn the television set on, saying "There's a Katherine Hepburn, Spencer Tracy movie on in a few minutes. Can we watch it?" Her father nodded, and Lee flipped off the table lamp beside her so they could watch the gray flickering light in the dark room.

For the most part they watched television in silence, with only an occasional comment on the movie. Her father had moved to the easy chair; she stayed on the couch, and sipped her last glass of wine, prolonging it. After her father finished his wine he went to the kitchen and mixed himself a drink. Once she looked over at him to find him looking at her. He said, "You're a sweet girl, Lee. You always have been." She smiled shyly, feeling an intensified rush of pride and embarrassment, the feelings she had always had when he praised her. "My baby," he said softly, and they both turned their eyes back to the television.

Close to the end of the movie she heard him mutter and snort, and saw that he was drifting off into a restless sleep. She brought a pillow from the couch and lifted up his head to slip it under. He reached up in his sleep to grab her hand. She was able to extricate it, and moved away quietly.

She remembered that the couch made into a bed, and decided to sleep there. She found an extra pillow in the bedroom and brought it out. She took off only her shoes and socks before lying down, carefully covering herself with her long coat. She was tired but had trouble getting to sleep; she kept seeing her father's face as he put her wrapped gift up to it. She could hear the swish-swish of cars on the pavement, see the lights move across the hall. Their rhythm was disturbing. At last she heard a familiar sing-songy voice in the back of her mind, saying "I will arise and go now." It was Colette, her old friend Colette. Lee felt herself smiling at this, at Colette and herself, and drifted off to sleep.

She had barely fallen asleep when she felt the bed shift and creak, and heard a sigh like a moan as her father lay down beside her. She moved over to give him room, but he moved along with her, moved closer yet. She said "Daddy" softly but he didn't seem to hear. He pushed his face into her hair; he murmured "Baby." Lee was wide awake now and beginning to be frightened. She said, louder, "Daddy," but he put his arm around her, his face appeared above hers, and he kissed her on the mouth in an un-fatherly manner. She could see he was very drunk. His arms moved around her in a close embrace, and his hands began to caress her. She pushed him away with some difficulty and crawled off the bed.

Father turned away on the bed, groaning softly. His eyes opened briefly part-way, and he looked around as if the room were unfamiliar to him. He made another sound halfway between a groan and an unintelligible exclamation, and curled up on the bed facing in her direction. She saw his eyes slowly close; soon he began to snore.

Lee stood motionless for several moments in something close to a state of shock. This was an occurrence she could never have imagined—yet as her thoughts and emotions began to sort themselves out, the most intense sensation was of guilt. She felt responsible; all these years, she saw, she had played along, encouraged this without being aware of its actuality. This was love, then; her father—a man, a physical man—loved her. She saw in a flash an incident which had taken place just before she moved away from home. She had been naked in the bathroom before taking a shower, standing in front of the full-length mirror on the back of the door. Her father had opened the door, not knowing she was there. He closed it quickly, but she knew he had seen her admiring herself. A wave of revulsion swept over her at the memory. She felt sick, and sank down on the chair.

She stayed awake for several hours, walking around the room or sitting and thinking. By the time a faint light began to appear in the room her feelings had changed. The sickness was gone, and with it her revulsion. She could look at her father in his sleep without feeling guilty. He seemed inexpressibly human, vulnerable. His hair was tangled, and there was a slight wetness on his cheek beside his partly opened mouth. He was still her Daddy. She thought long about her love for him, his love for her, and finally fell asleep in the chair, without Colette.

In full morning the sunlight and street noise woke her while her father still slept. She pulled the curtains and lay down on his bed in the bedroom, where she fell easily asleep again. This time she woke to hear noises in the living room. "Good morning," she called out. She heard the sound of a throat clearing, and a tousled head poked its way around the door. "Oh—hi. Sorry if I woke you." "That's all right," she said. "I need to to get up anyway. My bus leaves at one." "How about some breakfast? Eggs? I have some bacon, too." "Sounds great," she said. He nodded, pleased, and the head disappeared. Lee lay for a moment longer, contemplating the sunlight. It struck the fish tank by the window and was rippling and criss-crossed on the white ceiling. She closed her eyes, sinking for one more moment into the blindness of childhood, then got up to join her father for breakfast. ☐

JAMES HEARST

WHAT MATTERS

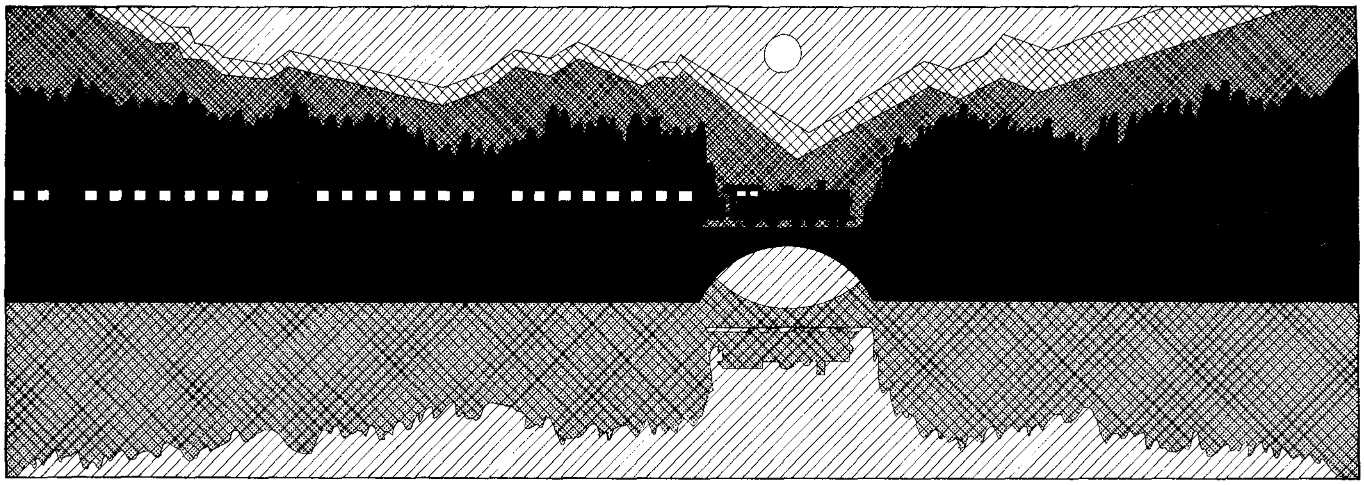
It rose high enough
to float the clouds,
this fountain of leaves,
this cottonwood tree
alone in the field's center.
A shade on hot days, a sundial
at noon, a landmark in any weather,
its roots dug for moisture,
it stunted the corn under it,
its trunk shoved machines aside.
It owned its ground by roothold,
dominated the field. My father
sawed it down, soaked the stump
with kerosene and burned it
even to the roots. Now furrows
run straight, make a slight hump
over the tree's grave, give the corn
its sky without shade. Meadowlarks
and bobolinks did not mourn
where they nested in meadow grass.
My father fitted the new pattern
to his work, only the passing birds
if they stopped would have to perch
on air and who knows what matters
to them, if they grieved or not.

THE TRIMMED BUSH

Grouchy, she said, you are
grouchy this morning. Your face
looks like left-overs from
yesterday's casserole.
He thought, she comes to
breakfast with her hair in
curlers, wrapped in a sloppy gown,
bare feet in flapping slippers.
She used to bloom in the
mornings with a fresh dress
and neatly combed hair. Perhaps
I ought to trim her a little,
shape her clean and neat.
She asked, what are you grinning about?
He answered, I was thinking of the
spirea bush I cut back last fall,
the one that burst out all white
with blossoms this spring.

UP IN THE BUSH

HELEN HAUKENESS



Manitowee, Saskatchewan, where I grew up, sat amid fierce forests of poplar and tamarack sweeping unbroken from the prairies up to tundra country. Snow fell from late September until May, first feathering downward to wrap the uppermost branches of trees, and later savagely carving itself into ice-hard drifts as high as a moose's head. Snowplows cleared the railroad tracks—trains from the south arrived each Monday, Wednesday, and Friday—though narrow dirt roads webbing sparse settlements "up in the bush" were lost from sight after the first heavy snowfall.

North of Regina and Saskatoon, north of the peopled region crouched above the United States border, Manitowee, with its population of 183, was a center of civilization. Plank sidewalks, laid out at varying levels along the entire length of main street, displayed signs announcing doctor, lawyer, merchant—the chief remaining with his Indians on the Cree reservation six miles away on the shores of Nut Lake, from where we sometimes heard the faint thrum of tomtoms on summer evenings. Manitowee had no policeman, and during the years I lived there, only one formally charged crime, though now and then a red-coated Mountie rode through to wilder parts of the country in need of law.

Since Mr. Reed, Manitowee's lawyer, returned from his year in the Saskatchewan penitentiary in winter, he came, of course, by train. Mr. Reed had been convicted of fraud. But after a year with no one to draw up legal documents, or to decide whether or not a verbal contract was valid, or, for that matter, to plan the annual curling bonspiel, people in town were inclined to feel charitable toward his lapse. The victim of his fraud lived miles away, and anyway, we missed him: a cheerful giant of a red-haired man, he had always been a leader in Manitowee society.

As if to make up for earlier condemning, the question people now asked each other was how Mr. Reed could best be welcomed home. Conversations focused on his many virtues; to forgive such a man became an opportunity no one dared let slip by. The druggist and his wife, Mr. and Mrs. Balfour, wanted to hold a dance in his honor in the town hall, but the two clergymen were against that, because it might mean excessive drinking—not long ago, the wife of one of the clergymen had stumbled over an Indian, drunk on too much vanilla extract, buried beneath a loose covering of fresh snow. Others suggested collecting money for a gift, but after a great deal of throat-clearing, that idea, too, was dropped. It was decided, at last, that every able-bodied person in town who wanted to show civilized good will would come to meet Mr. Reed at the railroad station when he arrived. No one thought to consult his son, who skated so well people predicted he would someday become a professional hockey player, or his wife, a shy, ladylike woman who gave piano lessons after school.

The temperature, that January day Mr. Reed was scheduled to arrive, dropped to 60° below zero, and at three o'clock in the afternoon, just before train time, a scarlet sun was already slipping behind the forest-rimmed horizon. I hurried alone the two blocks from the elementary school to the railroad station, my friend Ellie having decided to present a united front with her mother, who asserted she wouldn't move a single toe to welcome home a jailbird.

Along the way, I watched a couple of Indian dog-teams, fueled by snapping whips, pull their cargoes slickly over the snow's hard surface, and I threw a snowball or two, which missed their mark. Then, pressed for time, I ran on to the station. The cold had nipped a fair number of good intentions, but still it seemed a giant crowd had gathered. We waited with stomping feet and frost-pinked faces, warmed with the swelling pleasure of having forgiveness to dispense.

"Train's late," Mr. Johnson, of the post-office Johnsons, said behind me from under his fur-lined helmet. I turned around, looking past him, past the station windows whited over with frost as if in death, past Dr. MacLachlan in his sheepskin coat and leather breeks, past my parents, who were talking to the doctor, and I saw last month's community Christmas tree grasped in the mittened paws of jostling high school boys, who were dragging it down along main street toward the station. In minutes the dried skeleton was perched in a nearby snowdrift and set aflame, its light glinting on millions and millions of ice-jewels in the snow. Burning twigs floated down in livid arcs, and around the stump rivulets of water froze in tiny streams along the slope side of the drift. Above, the sky was alive with darkness, except for a cold moon, near the horizon, pulling its bellied edges together.

I thought I heard the distant agonizing of wolves from north of town, and moved closer in. Miss Grant, the elementary school teacher, smiled at me with frosted whiskers on her upper lip. Rosie Lechowski, a waitress at one of the two Chinese cafes, looked white with cold; the cafe proprietors, who rarely spoke to anyone in the town except each other, were not there. (It was said they hoarded every quarter and fifty-cent piece that came their way, shunning the Bank of Montreal for cardboard cartons kept beneath their beds.) Bennett Evans, who sold in his bakery the richest Scotch shortbread I have ever tasted, and whose tenor voice was often heard at weddings, looked twice as tall as usual in his fuzzy parka. A half dozen fur coats hid the richer ladies of the town, and I saw Mrs. Reed, standing by her tall son, push her muskrat collar upward.

Seven-year-old Morley Bounds placed his ear close to a rail to listen for vibration; his mother quickly pulled him up and wound his scarf more firmly around his head, then gave him a penny to place on the track to be flattened by the train. A thundering crack from the flame-licked tree pyramid shot stars into the air. We peered down the tracks, and then, so suddenly we caught our breath, a tiny point of light flashed in the distance, growing larger as we stamped our feet on the wooden platform.

The locomotive, fierce as a starving lynx, slunk down upon us and panted to a stop. Dirt-streaked canvas bags of mail were hurled to the platform; for once, no one paid any attention to them. We stared at the single passenger car, impatient with the jovial navy-blue conductor who lowered himself carefully down the steps. Then there was Mr. Reed: his red hair shorter than it had been, but himself as broad-shouldered and proud-looking as ever.

For a moment we stood like rows of bottles, until Dr. MacLachlan, Mr. Reed's old hunting crony, strode up to him and shook his hand. After that, frozen mouths stretched into smiles, and dozens of arms extended; soon the noise competed with New Year's Eve. Mr. Reed became more fiery minute by minute, as if someone had laid kindling on his embers, reaching over there, down here, through the eager welcome right up to Mrs. Reed, kissing her on the forehead. Her shy mouth slowly slid into a curve, and she reminded me of a winter tulip, with the wide collar of her coat turned upward toward her hair. She held out a hand to touch him, and Mr. Reed, his eyes on a welcoming friend nearby, shook it absently as he moved on. His tall son stood unmoving, arms pinned to each side, lean cheeks mottled with more than cold until his mother's hand found a nest in his. They did not look at one another.

Somebody started "For He's a Jolly Good Fellow," and we took deep gulps of air so we could sing more loudly; the cold air seared our lungs. Mr. Reed lifted an arm and snapped his fingers at the Balfour's wagging collie, who jumped and yelped, then let its tail wind down because no treat followed. He grinned at Morley Bounds, as if Morley would have to urge him to tell all the things he knew. Teddy Campbell, who had been expelled from school for two days for blaspheming the English royal family, began to whistle softly, "Hallelujah, I'm a Bum," but one of the clergymen stepped over to his side; the whistle quickly died away. Mr. Reed's face was redder and happier than I'd ever seen it.

When everyone had had a handshake—I was rationed a kiss blown from fingertips—Dr. MacLachlan took Mr. Reed by the arm, and a procession escorted him down the snowy, rutted main street toward his home behind the office where he practiced law. I stopped to adjust the laces on my boots, and to get a last look at the burning tree, which was now a pole of trembling light. Before I turned away I caught a glimpse of Mrs. Reed moving very slowly, one hand holding her collar high against her throat. Light was almost gone, but there was no mistaking the reluctance in her dark eyes.

Later that evening, I lay in bed watching the wood-burning stove in my bedroom cast flickering rosy light across the floor. Frost on my windowpane painted leaves and ferns and curling vines, but through the glass above the ice-jungle I could see a sweep of snow that had been our summer garden. Toward one end, where black spruce carried tons of snow in burdened arms, a flock of rabbits danced and played in polished moonlight. In the sky above, columns of aurora borealis flamed in silent jubilee, licking upward to the pole star, reaching toward the Big Dipper slung high and firm across the north. All around me there was light: snowlight, starlight, firelight, moonlight, shining into the deepness of winter. I leaned back against a pillow, pulling the blanket up around my chin, thinking of Mr. Reed, and how good we all had been to welcome him home from prison, and of the fiery tree beside the railroad station with its thousands of candles leaping in celebration.

Outside the bedroom door I heard my mother's patient voice speaking to my father, and the metallic clank of a closing damper; then the setting out of things for tomorrow's breakfast, which we would eat before the sun rose. I thought of Mrs. Reed. I saw her standing apart from the others with her tall son, huddling deeper into her coat as she turned slowly to follow her husband down the street. I closed my eyes, tucking the blankets tighter against the chill, and remembered the endless miles of weeping tamarack and fragile poplar that swept around us in every direction you could turn. And I knew, even then, even there, that civilization isn't what it ought to be. ☐

UNCLASSIFIEDS

The Thistle

I'm sitting there in my den reading an article about the devastating effects of cyberphilia on the contemporary American family, or what's left of it. Cyberphilia, in case you don't know by now, is the compulsion to program and operate a computer, in preference to all other activities (I don't own a computer, I am a cyberphobiac). Anyway, I am still interested in this article, I am gloating away at the verification of my original predictions, when in comes Eileen barking at me: "Paul, would you please get off your duff and go out to the driveway and cut down that damned thistle. If I've asked you once I've asked you a dozen times to cut it down."

"What's that thistle done to you," I reply, as I have probably replied at each of her requests all week. I am fifty-one years old and not allowed to read an article in peace in my study. I have worked for over thirty years so that I might be allowed to read an article all the way through to the end on a hot and muggy Saturday afternoon. But no, when Eileen wants a thistle removed from the driveway, then all else must be foresworn and her command obeyed or I will get no peace, the pleasure of reading about the domestic tragedies of the cyberphiliacs has been shattered. Eileen does not take my pleasure very seriously. She doesn't understand my admittedly rather desperate need to be right about *something*. "Eileen," I say, in one last doomed attempt to defeat the General, "it's not as though that thistle's going to tear the fender off the car . . . All right, all right, I'm going . . ."

So I put down my magazine, deprived of even getting to the juicy statistics and a few sample horror stories of children who have not spoken to their parents for years, husbands who have lost all sex drive, etc. The kind of stories that make me feel good about myself; that tell me I was right never to learn what that particular revolution was all about. No, instead I must go out into the sweltering, stifling shed; hunt around among oily rags and hyperactive wasps and hornets for the hedge-clippers—all this so that I can destroy the national emblem of Scotland. But I am by now something of an obedient cur. Oh, it's a well-enough adjusted thralldom I endure.

So I locate the clippers, beneath, as I predicted, the mountain of oily rags, and I am buzzed and tormented by every known species of wasp and hornet, and, since I am allergic to all of their venoms, I am justified in calling this a life-threatening tour of duty. One sting and it's all yours, Eileen: 30 years of National Geographics, all yours, a treasure. The six boxes of travel brochures, all yours. So much rubbish to prove one's been here, been around. And all of it undoubtedly in the dust-bin before my bones have stopped shaking. All the beloved rubbish, interchangeable with the next guy's. Why the hell not leave well-enough alone, let me go on reading about the smart guy who starved to death in front of his microelectric doo-da. No, no, no, never could it be so.

On Saturdays, Eileen likes nothing better than to issue orders for me to kill things, or be killed. *Those wasp nests on the shutters, kill them. The skunk got in the garbage again last night: find him and kill him (or get sprayed by him). Or better yet, get bitten by him, undergo a series of hideous rabies shots—since you mortally fear needles—Get up, Paul, put down your beloved magazine, Paul, get out there on the frontline, Paul. Risk your life, Paul. Whatever you do, Paul, don't let yourself get caught in a situation where you might feel comfortable, safe, or even right in one of your predictions.*

So now, here at last, I stand before this stately, decorous *Onopordum acanthium*. It is approximately three-and-half feet in height and, I regret to report, in magnificent bloom. This is, I realize even more emphatically, a totally senseless execution. I would have preferred she had ordered me to cross the street and cut the throat of the neighbor's dog. Yes, I could have accepted that order since the creature has an apparently incurable tendency to howl at the moon and kept us awake most of last night (most of the past six years is more accurate). But this thistle is a thing of almost breathtaking beauty, given to us by chance, and since Chance seems to be our new God, why am I now ordered to risk incurring the wrath of our new—and, most likely, extremely terrible and cruel when irritated—god? Eileen's whim. *Paul, go cut down that thistle by the driveway.* 'Why, my dear? Why should I cut down the thistle?' *Because I said so, Paul. Now, do it before I get mad!*

It is beginning to rain. As I stand here before this delicate, purple flower with orders to kill, storm clouds are moiling up out of the hills. I can feel the barometric pressure dropping by the minute, and it is beginning to make me feel light-headed. These summer electric storms have been having this effect on me the past couple of years. I have never actually fainted, but I feel as if I am going to, and it is quite unpleasant. Perhaps I shall faint and never wake up again. Then Eileen would have to do all the murdering herself. Would she feel differently then? Perhaps that would be good for her. After her first bloodshed, say, pouring snail-poison down a mole-hole, and all the little blind star-nosed babies emerge gasping for air, perhaps she'd give it up and become the patron saint of pests and varmints and thistles.

Now lightning is flashing and there is that deep rumbling that always precedes a real bang-up summer fury. I enjoyed them as a child, felt brave as I comforted my mother, who was terrified out of her mind by lightning. (That's where my child's imagination came up short: I thought it wouldn't strike *me.*) But now, add another entry to my slowly growing list of . . . well, I won't call them phobias, but things-that-fail-to-please-me. At the moment, I feel I may just keel over and be done with it, not have the slain thistle on my list of crimes when I show up at Chanceville.

However, if I make it back to the house and report to the General that her bidding has not been done, she may very well kill me, or at least make certain I never again pick up that magazine and find out just how awful other, more modern people's lives have become. I'll take my chances. I'll tell her it had to stop somewhere, all this killing. And I've taken my stand, finally, with this thistle.

—*James Tate*

Mommy Has a Headache

Jessica shuffled through a rack of dresses with the feeling: Haven't I done this before? It was Sunday and Sunday was usually the day she did this. Had she found another little perfect preferably marked-down designer something, perhaps the boredom would not have hit so hard.

Boredom was the interest she paid on statistical bliss: The woman who had everything. Still, she was months behind in her lovemaking. And not eager to catch up. If life was full of surprises, why were hers by appointment only?

When she was a kid she called God crazy. Nothing happened. No lightning. No sea change. Which made her wonder if He was a reliable source? Maybe yes. Maybe no. She asked for a sign. A shooting star. Life after death. Anything. If you can't sing, HUM, she felt like screaming.

She screamed. Her form of prayer. She joked because she needed cheering. When she was young, she felt old. Older now, she felt almost childish. She turned UP the TV. It was a silent film. Dancers were moving fast to slow music, faster-faster, like they lost their brakes.

Brakes. The Mercedes needed new ones, her shrink remembered during Jessie's tearful traumatic transgression. His initials were E.K. On the strength of his profession, he stamped DR EK on his license plates. The Jewish population roared. He thought they were raving over the car.

The patient's record is privileged and confidential. Tell him anything. Trust him. But understand his preference is perversion. For that he slaps his hands together and stops playing games on his dashboard watch. Still time is money, the cuckoo signals. He takes his Rolodex for a spin.

"Necrophilia?" she tests.

"Next week."

He rises, selects a club and bats a golfball across the carpet. His swing is improving.

Her husband had an idea. He was Tarzan. She was Jane. Then, they could switch—to spice it up, he said, because the trouble with sex was it wasn't sexy enough. Straining leopard-spots, he posed in the 3-way mirror, offering multiples of himself. Her daughter, fond of entrances, clip-clopped into their bedroom in high heels and Halston lingerie.

"Why is Daddy wearing your panties?"

"Go to BED," Daddy screamed.

"No. I'm a tree. These are my leaves," she said, sweeping up layers of silk.

"Go into your wintry season. Defoliate."

"I did before breakfast."

Jessica swept the child into her arms and voyaged back. Mother and child were compatible spirits. They sat on the shag rug biting paper off yellow Turkish Taffy that Emily calls chicken-flavored.

"Come to bed Honey," her husband summoned.

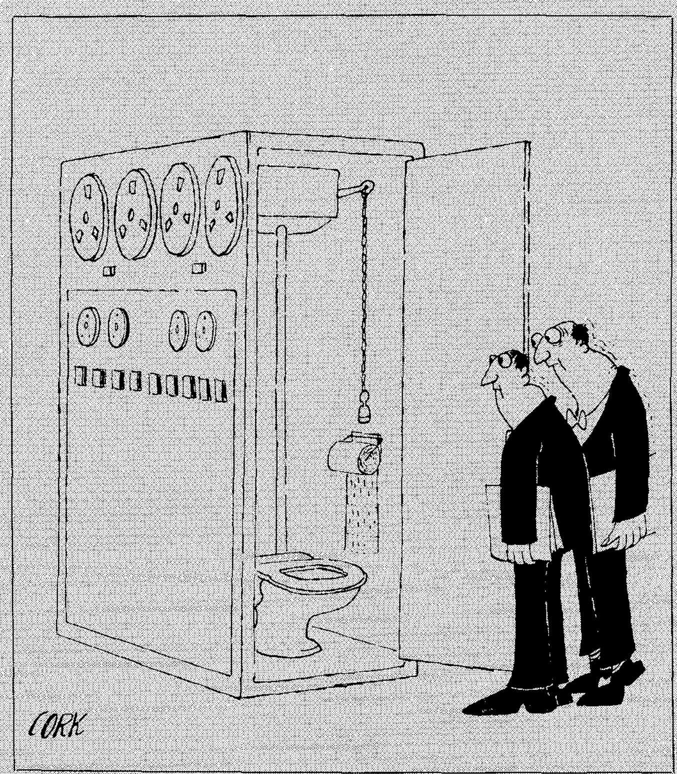
"Do I ha-ave to?" Jessica called back.

"NOW!"

For-get it, she thought, and deputized her daughter:

"Mommy has a headache," Emily relayed, tossing Teddy into the toypile. The two of them climbed into the canopied bed and slept happily. Ever after is another story.

—*Roberta M. Swann*



The Charm

When Meg was young she lived next door to an old woman whose house was wrapped in spider webs. Every few years the old woman cleaned them away carefully so as not to harm the spiders and then the sun glinted off shiny window glass and made Meg's eyes water. But the spiders set to work again, spinning and spinning, as though they couldn't bear to have the sun glint so brightly, weaving a sticky trap around the house, wrapping windows, doors, chimney and walls in filmy bunting.

The old woman baked cookies and pies and Meg rang her doorbell whenever she was summoned by the irresistible odors. She sat at the kitchen table and ate hot cookies and drank cold milk and listened to the old woman and watched as the spiders covered the windows with their webs.

"When I was young—" the old woman said, and sitting in her chair, apron draped about her like the webs that draped her house, she told Meg stories of her childhood as Meg munched and listened away the long summer afternoons.

Sometimes if the old woman was busy in the kitchen, Meg wandered through the living room, looking at the wonders on display, curio cabinets filled with tiny boxes, cloisonné, carved ivory, porcelains so delicate they seemed about to break at her glance. There were books whose bindings were mossy with decay. If she put out a hand to touch a vase or bowl, it came away with a soft patina of dust, a sprinkling of powder that covered everything in the room. The imprint of her fingers showed on table, book, chair—each object connected to the other by silky, almost invisible threads.

She would wander back into the kitchen, afraid of disturbing all the sleeping things, waiting, she sometimes thought, for someone who loved them to come and kiss them awake.

The old woman clanged pots and pans, baking and cooking all day, yet she lived alone and no one ever visited. Meg wondered what she would do with the good things she made if Meg didn't live right next door.

Once she asked, but the old woman just smiled and said, "Sit down, child, and I'll tell you a story," and Meg settled herself into a chair in front of a plate of steaming pie.

"When I was young," she said, "I lived right here in this house with my mother and father. One day (I was your age, about nine or ten), I was walking to school when I noticed the trees were covered with a filmy network. It caught the sun in dew drops that hung like miniature pendant diamonds. Every day as I passed, the trees were covered more thickly, drooped more heavily. Soon they looked snow-covered in the white morning light. As spring turned to summer I felt as though I were walking through a giant cocoon. Then one day a young man came toward me. He smiled and nodded at the trees. 'Aren't they prettier this way?'

"I stood still, startled by his sudden approach. I'd never seen him before, with his dark eyes and black rumpled hair, his arms covered with tiny bristly hairs. He seemed to belong to the trees, the webs. There was something in his hand. He held it out to me. 'Take it,' he said, urging his hand forward. A charm, a delicate circle of gold was nestled there. He said, 'I will be back one day. Wait.' And faded into the trees."

She put her hand to her throat where Meg saw the lacy filigree of gold.

"Oh," Meg said, "It's beautiful. Could I—would you let me—try it on?"

The old woman thought a minute, then removed the charm and fastened it around Meg's neck.

Meg gazed into a cloudy mirror. A spider scurried across, left a filmy line. Her image stared back. She couldn't take her eyes away.

From a distance she heard the old woman say, "I must get to work now," and reluctantly Meg took off the charm.

She thought about the story the following week, sitting on her front porch, sniffing to find out what the old woman was baking. The scent of roses was all that came to her. Maybe I'll visit, she thought. Maybe she'll let me try on the charm again.

The kitchen was dark and the door was closed as she walked up the back steps. She peeked in the window, brushing aside a few webs. The usual clutter of bowls and pans. Nobody home. But the old woman never went anywhere. She pushed the doorbell. Maybe she was sick. Upstairs in bed. The chimes echoed inside. Meg could hear them through the door, an unfamiliar, unsettling sound.

As she turned to go, a car pulled into the driveway and a woman got out. She pulled a sign from the back seat and began to hammer it into the front lawn, covered like the house with a blanket of filmy threads.

"What is that?" Meg asked.

The woman smiled but did not answer. She gestured at the sign, climbed into her car and quickly backed down the driveway as if she couldn't wait to get away.

Meg stared at the FOR SALE sign. She walked home slowly, sadly, somehow bereft.

The weeks that followed, Meg spent a lot of time in the old woman's back yard—maybe the young man had really existed—maybe he had turned up after all. She was drawn to the yard day after day, lethargic, dreamy, a peculiar hollowness inside. She watched as movers came and took the old woman's belongings away.

The house remained covered by its filmy overcoat, in a state of suspension. She looked through the empty windows—and sometimes saw shadowy forms behind the web curtains. Only shadows, she told herself, but a shiver would slide down her spine nonetheless. Once she thought she saw the old woman bent over her stove. She ran up the steps only to find the door locked, the kitchen empty, a rat atop the stove disturbed by her joyous pounding.

The FOR SALE sign disappeared into the grass, wrapped more securely each day in spidery filaments.

Wildflowers grew undisturbed amidst the scrubby grass. Meg sniffed their perfume and dreamed about the delicious treats she used to sample at the old woman's house. Then one day she saw something shining under a fallen leaf. The old woman's charm, half buried in the dirt. She dug it up and left, holding it tightly. Out of the corner of her eye, she saw someone fade into the trees at the back of the yard. She cleaned off the charm and hung it around her neck. She would keep it in case the old woman—well, as a memento. Well, she admitted, she'd wanted it all along.

Soon afterward the spiders came to Meg's house, spinning lace curtains across the windows, connecting the furniture with their tiny tendrils. Meg's mother and father washed and wiped and worked into the night to get rid of them but every morning the sticky threads covered more completely, the house filled with the murky light of sun through shaded glass.

Meg helped her parents, only she was careful not to harm the tiny spinners. She watched—through the windows, down the street, in the yard—hoping to see the shadowy figure once again. She waited and grew old. She waited and did not leave. Years passed and she waited. Her mother and father died. The old woman's house was sold. A young family moved in. They made the place sing and shine.

In her kitchen Meg baked cookies and cakes as she waited and told stories to visiting neighbor children. When they came through her door, carefully past the geometric tapestries that draped the entry, she would look up as though expecting someone else.

—*Elaine Margolis*

A Page of L's

Blue as in fairy tales, clear as in the best of good weather reports. A sky to sing hallelujahs to, a sky to celebrate, a sky to cherish! There wasn't a thing wrong with that sky. The sun was shining from it with a brilliance to cheer the most dedicated of Cassandras. The wind was blowing from the east, sweeping the world's accumulated debris out and away. Exhilaration, invigoration, grace, everything the human spirit could desire on a morning. It may be that the pleasure craft out at sea were having a hard time in so stiff a breeze; maybe the citizenry on their outings were getting a noseful of the dust that was blowing about; maybe some wide-brimmed hats were careening down the avenues (having left the heads they'd been sitting on), but all in all, a near perfection—this day—yes, very near.

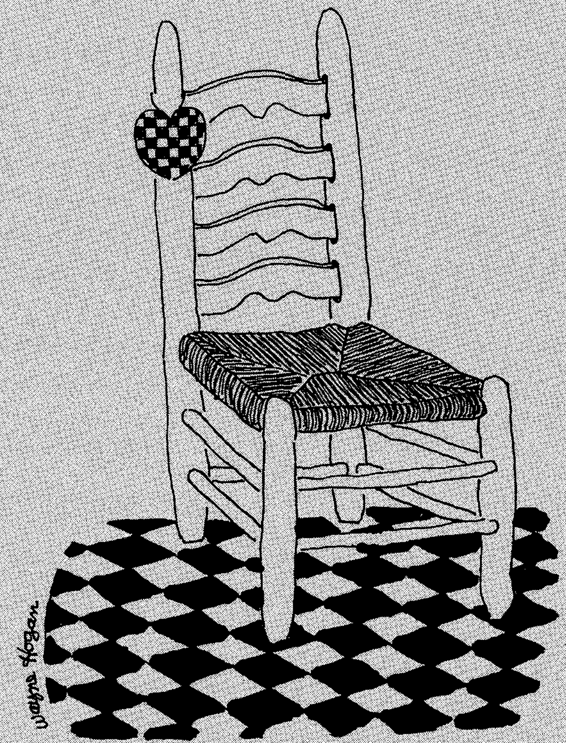
Waking to all this splendor should have been pure pleasure. But my view was marred, was in fact ruined by a window in urgent need of cleaning.

I thrust aside the offending pane. I let in the blue world, the crisp and jolly air, the rays of the dancing sun. I watched them vault off the window sill, bounce off my table, skip to my shiny white telephone. My world, trying to match the sparkle of the outdoors. Except for that window.

Taking up my little address book, I searched out the name of the Lorelei Window Cleaning Company. Lorelei—poetic souls, Germans, of course. Holding my cup of morning coffee in one hand, I put down the book in order to dial.

I had better confess about my little directory. It was in a lamentable state: worn and stained, its pages dogeared, full of thumb prints. Seams were showing. Here and there a page was making to get loose. Names crossed out, written over, scribbled in. Numbers replaced, corrected, inked in. People move—move away, move close, move far—have to find space. My book had done service too long.

As for copying its entries over? Who wants to be reminded of friends vanished into the African bush or into the Mongolian steppes? Who wants to remember others disdaining to be in touch, not to speak of those who no longer have that option—having passed on to a (let's hope) better place?



On this glorious morning then, as I was about to call the Loreleis, my messy little book lay open at the L's—when what would have to happen?—a gust of that east wind whooshed into the room and whooshed back out again . . . taking with it my page of L's.

Of all the pages—the L's!

Believe me, I didn't lose a second. Slapping the book shut, I leaned out of the window—leaned into that perfect day and into that very stiff breeze—trying to spot my page on its presumably westerly and presumably downward journey.

What is it one sees from a window three stories up? One sees tops. Tops of trees, tops of cars, tops of citizens walking their dogs, and the tops of those dogs (shaggy ears and all). What one does not see is a rogue page of L's.

I flung out of my ruffled *déshabille*. Not the attire for my enterprise. Shorts instead, loafers, a sweater . . . any old thing. Then down the stairs, out the door, eyes to the ground, moving west.

You'd never believe how many bits of paper are strewn about a city block. Caught here and caught there: under stoops, in doorways and flower beds, under parked cars, between gateposts, behind garbage pails. Those uncaught were twirling in the gutter. What was to distinguish my page from what was otherwise trash? Nothing much. Some scribbles. Nothing.

I searched. I searched front yards and alleyways. I peeked into every corner and crack. I sifted through every pile of garbage. I turned over everything papery and white. Down on my haunches, on my knees, I looked under everything that could be looked under.

"What color is your cat?"

"How long has your cat been lost?"

This is how people offered me brotherhood. I tell you, they would have combed the town for something furry. For a sheet of paper . . .? To a cat-lover, paper is a toy for his pet.

When the ground refused to yield up my page, I looked to the trees. Passers-by thought me deranged or in pursuit of a parakeet. Acting on a theory of cross currents, I then routed east . . . and east . . . and further east.

Even the most fiercely determined must sometimes admit defeat. The L's were out of my life (for the time being, at any rate). The task was to get them back, to remember them, to recall them one by one. Those L's.

And there were such a lot of them. L is not a letter to lack candidates. Would that I had lost the Q's instead. My page of Q's has barely an entry. And neither does my page of Z's. But the L page was overflowing. And I assure you, it was much in use. For some of my favorite people are named L. As a matter of fact, now that I think of it, the L's are interesting people—knowing people. Far better informed than the B's. If I were to compare the L's and the B's, the L's would win it, hands down.

Take that fellow for instance. Such a smart man. He does logarithmic equations in his head. His name now . . .? His name escapes me for the moment. Still, a man of stature, a man of genius. Then there is that wonderful couple. Sweet, generous, self-sacrificing. Golden hearts. Only the L page holds such hearts. Le . . . Les . . . Lo . . . L something or other. And then, how about her, how about that woman, that intrepid devotee of the arts? Cultivated right to her fingertips. She knows each and every opera—text and score. Her name now? What is her name? And I must not forget that funny man—that prankster. How that crazy clown used to make me laugh—turning somersaults, reciting the encyclopedia backwards. An L if ever there was an L, that fellow. Name is on the tip of my tongue.

But, dear heavens, for a moment there I almost forgot that my best friend's name starts with an L! Indeed, his name was entered at the head of the page. Foreign name. Not unattractive. Exotic sounding. Always enjoyed seeing it there, straddling the first line. It'll come to me presently, my best friend's name. So will the others. They'll pop back into my head. Those L's. Don't you think?

As for now, there are those Loreleis. I could write them down. They'd have the page all to themselves. They'd hog that page, those Germans. Maybe, I think, I'd rather do my own cleaning.

I went to get the pail from under the sink. I watched it as it filled up with water. Thoughtfully I turned off the tap and let my eye stray to the window and beyond—to that exquisite day glittering in the unabashed sun. The wind was still blowing but with muted vigor. A steady stream of golden air, golden light—such a glory.

There on the table lay my little book, just as I had left it. I opened it at the place where the L's used to be. Casually but carefully I crooked my finger and slid it under the next page, gently working to loosen the binding. Then I placed the open book on my upturned palms, and I raised my arms up to the sky.

The god of the setting sun, in this, his most resplendent hour, accepted my oblation. The zephyr rose once more to claim his second trophy this day . . . my page of M's.

I went to pick up my pail of water and set to work with a heart as clear and as free as the wind and the sun and the sky.

—Madeleine Gekiere

Cookies in Bed

"If you take cookies to bed you'll get ants in it," Patsy's mother remonstrated.

Well, Patsy *had* taken cookies to bed, oatmeal ones with icing, and the ants were crawling between her toes, up her legs, all over her body. She would be eaten alive by morning.

She sobbed.

Patsy's father tore into her room, turned on the light, tore back the covers.

"There ain't no ants!" he shouted.

And he was right, there were just a lot of crumbs on the sheet, under Patsy's skinny white legs. Her father stormed out.

—Gail Donohue

THE PRESENT CASE

The Assistant

DAVID HELLERSTEIN

It's five-fifteen Friday afternoon, and the nurses' station on Eight is a madhouse. It's 85 degrees. The air conditioner, jammed in the only window, blows hot air—the compressor's dead. The nurses are finishing up report; the brand-new residents, who just finished their internships three weeks ago, are furiously writing notes; the medical consultant is sifting through a pile of pink paper for a certain lab result. Everyone's talking. The phone is ringing, but the clerk, on the other line, ignores it. One of the nurses is trying to hand out paper cups of pills from a blue plastic tray to patients who are lined up before the door. They look in at us, amused at our craziness.

Then Victor arrives. Victor is our Chief Resident, as new at his job as I am at mine; we started three weeks ago too, on July 1, that date when medical students become interns, interns become residents, and residents graduate. Behind him trail the resident on call, the nursing supervisor and a few medical students.

"Hey! Let's have some quiet!" Victor yells.

Everyone goes silent for a moment. But then there's something from the ward, and the aides go out to see what's happening, and everyone's blabbering again.

Victor and the resident on call and the students all crowd around Donna, the nurse who's giving report. Bernard and Shriver are on maximal observation, Paul is talking suicide but probably won't do anything, André needs more Haldol. I turn back to the chart I'm trying to review, one of Ellie's patients.

Since July 1 I've been Assistant Unit Chief on the Eighth floor, an inpatient unit at the best madhouse in Manhattan. According to my job description, I supervise residents and psychology interns and medical students, run meetings, teach and do research—but so far my job has come down to just one thing: trying to keep Ellie in line. Ellie McDonald, one of the new second year residents, is impossible. She's blonde, pale, a graduate of one of the six year B.S.-M.D. programs and very very young. Her notes are sloppy, her presentations are confused, she always tries to get someone else to do her admissions, and you can never find her when you need her. Worse, she actually seems to take pleasure in giving you a hard time. And then, just as you're about to bash her one, she'll apologize: So sorry you couldn't find me, gee, I really should have told the nurses where I was. It won't happen again, I promise. Sure, Ellie.

"Hey! Hellerstein!" It's Victor. "What's with this new patient hearing commands to kill herself?"

"Which one?" I say.

"Tina something."

"Tina Brown." (Her name, like others in this essay, has been changed). She's Ellie's patient, of course. "I've got the chart right here. There's nothing about voices."

"Donna says the patient's been hearing commands."

"Well, Ellie presented her at team meeting and didn't say anything about it."

"Did you see the patient?"

"Not yet," I say. Realizing: I should have. She could be hanging herself, cutting her wrists, right this moment . . .

"Where's Ellie?" I ask the clerk.

"I don't know. I just tried to page her."

"Well, she was at team meeting," I say. "Is she signed out for the weekend? Hey!" The residents, Lazlo and Ronald and Ann, look up from their charts. "Did she sign out to any of you?" No answer. "Damn it! Did she ask anyone to cover for her?" They shake their heads.

Victor pushes the door open and strides out onto the ward. I follow. He's furious, I can see, but I'll be damned if I'm going to let him blame it on me. I can't keep my eye on Ellie every minute.

We find Tina in her room. She's a cute little fourteen year old, crazy as anything. Victor takes his hands out of the pocket of his grimy white coat and grabs her arm: there's something red on her wrist. He pulls up the sleeve of her gown. It's too red to be blood, too flat. Looks like magic marker. Behind her, on the wall beside the bed, she's drawn crazy graffiti, and weird, sneering faces—a devil, a maddened Donald Duck. Victor, ignoring them, interrogates Tina about her voices. How many are there? Where are they coming from? What do they tell her to do? How'd she get those scratches on the back of her hand?

When he's finished, he glares at me, orders an aide to stay with her, and hurries back to the nurses' station.

There, in front of everyone, he details my failings as Assistant Unit Chief.

"I hold you personally responsible," he says. "That girl could have killed herself. If you residents aren't getting an adequate history, then you should talk to every patient as soon as they get to the floor. Understand?"

I look at Victor. "First of all," I say, "I don't think she's really suicidal."

"I don't want to hear it," Victor says. "We're running late. We don't have time to discuss this. Just get Ellie to do her job, that's all." He turns and leads the Two and the students and the supervisor out of the nurses' station.

"Damn it!" I say. "Where is Ellie McDonald? I'm going to kill that jerk."

"She wasn't hallucinating," Ellie says Monday morning; we're sitting in my office, a tiny room with a linoleum floor and a sink in the corner and a slit-like window showing a gleaming slice of river.

"Then what was she hearing?" I say.

"They weren't real voices. They

were parrotty sounds, that's how she described them, one in her left ear, one in her right ear."

"They weren't saying she should kill herself?"

"No."

"Did you ask her?"

"Yes. Yes I did." Ellie sits forward, and puts her hand on my arm.

"But you didn't put it in your note."

"Because it was negative. Why should I put that in?"

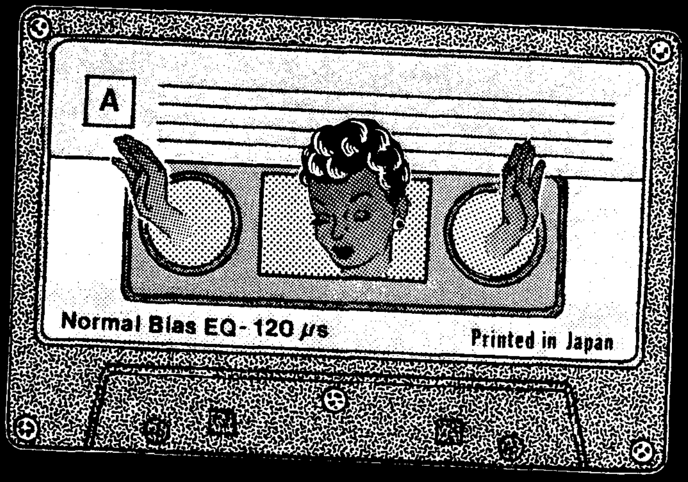
"Because it was on the E.R. note. You've got to cover your ass." I pull away from her. "Anyhow, where were you? You know you're supposed to sign out your new patients."

"I forgot, okay? I went home and I forgot to sign out."

"You forgot?"

She bursts into tears. She was on call the night before, she says, she'd had practically no sleep, and then she had to admit this patient—it wasn't *fair*.

Shilling by shilling, Daphne saved enough from her job at the shebeen to buy a Sanyo model X-810 twin cassette portable stereo.



She used to tape shows off the radio, for playback with coffee before work, so her head, and her shoulders, and her hips would be wide awake.

When she figured out how, she started mixing her own. Her favorites were the old girl groups like Dark City Sisters and The Flying Jazz Queens, but she also enjoyed The Jabulani Quads, The T.V. Sisters, Michael Jackson, The Cockerels, and any group with Mister King Jerroo.

Meanwhile, the government was constantly forcing them out of the townships, out to the bantustans, to live with and like scrawny trees. They made Daphne go to a remote corner of Kwa Zulu where dead babies far outnumber C batteries, and it almost broke her spirit.

M. KASPER

"But Ellie," I say. "You volunteered. You said at Rounds Friday that you wanted an admission because your census was low and you have a lot of discharges coming up."

"So I was wrong," she says. "I thought I could handle it."

"That's understandable," I say. "But the patient's safety is our main concern."

"Okay. Okay, you're right. Just don't get so down on me. Give me a chance, okay?"

She picks up her bulging briefcase and rushes out of my office. I can hear her wrestling with the door to the unit. It slams. A few minutes later I follow her into Rounds.

In Rounds, I sit between Dr. Blanding, the Unit Chief, and Roberta, our Head Nurse. Lazlo and Ronald present the two admissions from the weekend, an old lady with agitated depression and a twenty-five year old who abuses cocaine. Then we hear Weekend Report. One patient cut her wrist on Sunday but didn't require stitches. A patient scheduled for shock treatment drank water at five a.m. Can he still get his treatment? We go quickly through our 25 cases, the nurse reading a brief report, the resident writing orders. I'm a bit nervous as I hear all this news. It's hard to keep it all in my head, to remember the plan for each patient, to think of what we've forgotten. But then, after awhile, I sit back and relax. The staff is good. Nothing will go wrong. It's still cool at this hour, and it's very pleasant to be sitting here, in this room along the river, from which you can see the gleaming water and the barges and the tankers. After all, this is my operation now. I don't have to draw bloods anymore or sit for hours on the phone or run all over looking for an EKG machine. Never mind that Dr. Blanding's officially in charge: after 35 years at this hospital he's more than glad to let the Assistant take over.

Roberta closes the report book after the last patient, and people start leaving.

"Hold on," I say. "Who's up for admissions?"

The nurses and social workers and students file out; the residents stay.

"I have five patients," says Ann.

"I'm not discharging 'til next week."

"I have six," says Lazlo.

"I have five also," says Ronald.

"Ellie?" I say.

"Three. But I don't want to admit any patients today."

"Well," I say, "You're clearly up first. If you can get someone to trade . . ."

No one says a word.

"Looks like it's you, Ellie," I say.

"That's not fair," she says. "I admitted Thursday and Friday. I'm going to be up all week."

"Look," I say, "That just happens sometimes. It happens to everyone. There are weeks when you don't have any admissions. That's just the way it is."

"Why don't *you* admit patients?" she says.

"Me?" I say.

"Yes, *you*."

I laugh. "Ellie, I can't believe you."

"Really. I'm serious."

"I have enough other things to do," I say.

We have staff lunch every Monday at noon with Dr. Blanding and Roberta and me and the social workers. We usually go down to the elegant dining hall at the research institute; today, though, we're short on time, so we eat in the hospital cafeteria, a windowless basement. On one wall there's a mural showing the hospital in its various incarnations, from its infancy as a small brick building, to its second stage as a high, dark Victorian building, to its current shape, achieved fifty years ago, a towering neo-Gothic structure, whose peaks King Kong might easily be imagined to scale in search of Fay Wray—the painting, an ideal view, shows the hospital right along the banks of the river, as though you might just stroll out to the water's edge for a picnic, without being run over by the careening traffic on the drive or mugged by vandals stripping abandoned cars.

"So—how have the residents been doing?" says Dr. Blanding.

"Pretty well," I say. "Ron's having some problems setting limits with his borderline patient. He was seeing her over an hour a day. I really had to get down on him to shorten the sessions. But he sees that she's better when he just doesn't give in to her. Lazlo's still being obsessive. And he's not giving enough medications. Ann's doing great. I don't have any complaints about her."

"What about Ellie?"

"Ellie!" I say. "My God! I don't know what to do with Ellie."

"I just got a call from her this morning," Dr. Blanding says. "She says she's being assigned more than her share of admissions. She wanted me to excuse her from admitting patients today."

"Are you kidding? She doesn't do anywhere near her share. The other Twos are about to kill her."

"So are the nurses," says Roberta.

"How's that?"

"Well, she always writes her orders wrong," says Roberta. "We've gone over the right format a dozen times, but she still leaves things out—whether to give them p.o. or i.m., how often. Then, when you page her, she'll scream that you're interrupting her. Or she won't answer at all."

"Not to mention," I say. "She keeps forgetting to sign her patients out."

"Doesn't she do anything right?" says Dr. Blanding. "I like her."

"That's because she flirts with you," says Roberta.

"She does flirt very nicely," says Dr. Blanding. He seems amused.

"Well, it bothers me," says Roberta.

"I don't care who she flirts with," I say, "as long as she does her job."

"Is she having personal problems?" says Dr. Blanding.

"I don't know."

"Couldn't we fire her?" says Roberta.

"I only remember firing one resident," says Dr. Blanding. "And that was a fellow who got one of the long-term patients pregnant. It was very embarrassing, because the patient was delusional, and she kept telling people that I was the father."

We all laugh. My beeper goes off. It's the Unit. They can't read one of Ellie's orders, and she's not answering her pages.

"It should read, '5 mg. p.o. or 2.5 i.m. q 2 h prn severe agitation,'" I say. "Okay?"

"Okay."

"And leave Ellie a note about it," I say. "I want to see her."

When I get back to the table they're still talking about Ellie.

"You know, I think we need a plan for her," I say.

"How's that?"

"Well," I say. "Let's assign one of the nurses to go over her orders with her every morning. And, Dr. Blanding, every time she calls you to complain, just refer her back to me. And let's keep track of when people can't find her, what the circumstances are. I'll meet with her a couple times a week . . . I mean, she can't beat us all."

"Want to bet?" says Roberta.

That very afternoon I find Victor having at Ellie in the nurses' station in front of everyone.

"You don't *think* you write an order," Victor's saying, "You damn well *write* it, and check it, and see your goddamn patient before you change doses."

"What's going on?" I say.

"You should know," Victor says. "You should be on top of this. It's the same patient. She's having a dystonic reaction right this minute, and we're coming around on afternoon rounds and the nurse tells me there's no order for Benadryl."

"But I wrote the order this morning," Ellie says. Her eyes are full of tears.

"Then where is it?"

"I don't know. It should be in the order book."

"'I don't know' isn't acceptable," Victor says.

"Hey, Victor," I say. I pull him out of the nurses' station and around the corner, into the dining room, which is empty. Victor clenches his jaw; he's obviously counting the seconds. "I think it'd be better if you backed off."

"How? How's that going to fix this mess?"

"Because we're working on it," I say. "And screaming doesn't help her any. Why don't you go on with sign-out. I'll take care of Ellie."

"All right," he says.

We go back to the nurses' station. I take Ellie with me down to Tina's room. Tina is sitting on her bed in a sweatshirt and jeans. She's paler and pudgier than when she came to the hospital. Her head is twisted to the side, and her tongue is stuck in the corner of her mouth. On the table beside her bed are a pile of drawings. The faces are less angry than what she drew when she first came in, and the words in the balloons make some sense.

"Can you straighten out, Tina?" I say. She strains but her head moves only a few inches. "Ellie, test her muscle tone." Ellie reaches for Tina's hand. "No. Like this. Take her wrist in your hand. Hold just above the elbow. And bend back and forth. You've got to check for parkinsonianism. There's cogwheeling, right?"

"Right," Ellie says.

"So go tell the nurse we want Benadryl. Twenty-five i.m."

"Okay." Ellie goes.

"You'll feel better in a few minutes," I tell Tina. "We'll stay here until you're better."

Afterwards, I take Ellie to my office, and we go through the chart page by page.

"Let's look at today's note," I say. "What do you mean, 'muscle tone normal'? She's had three reactions in the past twenty-four hours. Is she posturing or really having dystonic reactions? And 'mental status unchanged.' That's just plain wrong. She's hallucinating more, she's more delusional, she's thought-blocking. Is she organic? You don't indicate that you've even *thought* about these things. And your orders . . ." I flip through the order sheets, to the most recent set. "Look at this. You rewrote the orders yesterday but you left out the Cogentin. Was that on purpose?"

"Yes," she says, blushing. She leans forward, her knee against my knee, and touches the back of my hand. I pull away.

"It was? I don't agree with it. But if it was on purpose then you have to write, 'd/c Cogentin.' And what about the Benadryl? Same with that. I can't blame Victor for getting upset."

"He really picks on me," she says.

"He does," I say. "But these are basic things. It's not so hard to do them right."

She leans forward again, close to me, and I pull away again.

"So, are you going to increase the Haldol?"

"I'll do it, but I don't want to."

"You're not in much of a position to disagree," I say. I close the chart and hand it back to her. "Oh, there's one more thing, which I don't think you're going to like. This . . . this touching. I don't know if you do it because you're nervous or what, but I think it makes people take you a lot less seriously."

"Oh!" Ellie takes a deep breath. "Okay." Not looking at me, she gathers her things together, and leaves.

"You don't think it's getting better?" I say to Victor at the Assistant Unit Chiefs' meeting. Half a dozen of us Assistants meet twice a week to go over the problems on our floors. I'm back at my usual topic.

"Maybe a little," Victor says. "But not fast enough. She's really getting on my nerves. A couple more bad evaluations and she just might get bounced."

"You know what I think," I say. "I think she can handle the work. She's just nervous about taking responsibility for patients."

"You're really giving her the benefit of the doubt," Victor says.

"I guess." I talk about our plan for Ellie, and the other Assistants toss in some suggestions. Victor doesn't say anything more about Ellie, so maybe he thinks it's okay; he goes on to talk to the Assistant from Two, whose residents are threatening to go on strike.

I suppose I am giving Ellie the benefit of the doubt, because for the next month or so she continues doing fairly lousy work. The nurses still scream at her for her orders, the notes she writes (which I go over with her every afternoon) are still vague, her presentations at Professor Rounds (which I also review with her) are incomplete and badly organized; and she still does strange things like trying to transfer a patient with chest pain to the coronary care unit before even getting an EKG, or like announcing one Wednesday that she's leaving that afternoon for a long weekend in Florida. But my basic feeling is that eventually she'll be okay, that eventually she'll calm down and start doing decent work. Part of it is that I remember how it was being a Two, suddenly switching from the certainties of medicine, the lab tests, the numbers, the x-rays, the magic drugs, to the utterly foreign territory of psychiatry, where your frames of reference are constantly shifting, where there are damn few hard facts, where your treatments depend on how you use your 'self', where you can feel like you're drowning in craziness.

As a Two I was just about as scared and bumbling as Ellie is. The only difference was that I wasn't the worst resident on the floor—I was the second worst. So I didn't have to go around being blamed for everything that went wrong. The guy who was the worst on my floor *was* blamed, and he had such a miserable time that he almost dropped medicine together.

So in a way I guess I'm easy on Ellie.

And things improve. That makes a less exciting story, but as an Assistant my job is to make people's stories less interesting, at least from the point of tragedy. A patient's uneventful recovery makes less of a story than a suicide. A resident learning to do the job right doesn't make as good a story as failure and disgrace.

So I have to warn you that Ellie's story gets much less interesting, because by November she begins to do pretty good work. The nurses don't hate her anymore. On her birthday Roberta even brings Ellie a cake in Rounds. Of course Ellie's not perfect; but if she tries to start ducking an admission, I'll just remind her she's up to her old tricks again, and after a few minutes of arguing she'll suddenly smile embarrassedly and say, "Oh, okay then," and will take the case.

She's doing well enough that I can go see my long-term cases, or use the computer over in the main hospital for my research project, and will know I'm not going to be paged away from my work every five minutes. Or I can go to a job interview in Westchester or Brooklyn or up at Columbia and when I get back can be fairly confident the floor won't be in chaos and Ellie McDonald nowhere to be found. Lazlo is out for two weeks with a bad back, and Ellie, amazingly, does her share in helping to cover for him. And when I take a week off at Thanksgiving I'm almost tempted to ask Ellie to be Acting Assistant Unit Chief—but after one of her sarcastic comments to Roberta I realize that's hoping for too much.

One problem remains, though. Ellie doesn't like letting go of her patients. Unless I keep bugging her about it she won't set discharge dates or find the day programs or clinics or whatever followup they need. Dr. Blanding and I have a running argument: Is it because she's too attached to her patients or that she just hates doing admission workups? Either way, it's clear that she keeps her patients for days or weeks longer than they need to be in the hospital.

Tina's the worst. Ellie has gotten very attached to Tina. Tina's very playful, always bringing Ellie candy or fruit or giving her funny drawings. And Ellie brings Tina things from the gift shop or the deli. They like each other—that's fine. But now all Tina needs is to be medicated enough to be discharged. It sounds simple. A stable dose of neuroleptics, interviews at a home for adolescents, set a discharge date. But Ellie has found it incredibly complicated. For one thing Ellie thinks Tina is on too much medication. So she's continually writing orders to lower the dose. When the dose gets low enough Tina becomes psychotic again, and will do something mildly self-destructive like scratching her hand, and the interviews at the homes will have to be postponed. Ellie will increase the dose again and Tina will have a dystonic reaction or become oversedated. Then Ellie will switch to a new medication. And the whole cycle will begin again.

One day in December, the third or fourth time this has happened, Tina is put in seclusion for attacking another patient. I've had enough. I corner Ellie after Rounds.

"Now what have I done?" Ellie says.

"It's what you haven't done," I say. "Don't you think it's time we got her out of here?"

"She's not ready yet. She's still psychotic."

"Only because you cut down her dose again."

"Well, she's been looking so much better, I thought she didn't need as much. I don't want her to get tardive."

"But she obviously needs that much right now," I say. "You think it's better that she keeps relapsing?"

"I don't know. I . . . maybe if we keep trying other medications we'll find one that works."

"You haven't tried any of them long enough," I say. "You'd have to keep her on one dose for at least a month, but you change every week. Anyhow there's no reason that has to be done here—they can do it at the group home."

Ellie sits very still.

"What?"

"I don't want . . ." she says. She pauses.

"What?"

"I don't like the idea of her going to the group home. I think it's terrible. She's not going to have a family there. She's going to have a terrible life."

"Where else can she go?"

"Nowhere. I know that. But I wish we could do more for her. It's terrible."

"We just can't keep her here indefinitely."

"Why not?"

"Be realistic, Ellie. We're an acute care unit. She used up her coverage months ago. And we're not doing her any favor. The more attached she gets here, the worse it'll be when she leaves."

"How do you know?"

"*Ellie.*"

She laughs. "You always sound so exasperated when you say my name."

"I wonder why," I say.

"I guess I am sort of frustrating sometimes," she says.

My last week on the unit, after two more delays, Tina is finally set to be discharged to a group home. Ellie looks upset that morning at Rounds as she presents Tina's case, but she pulls herself together and goes on to her other patients. She just admitted a manic stockbroker, and she presents his case excellently. She'd gotten him medicated within an hour of admission, quieted him down, met with the family; altogether a damned good job.

There's a party that morning at the Assistant Unit Chiefs' meeting; champagne in plastic cups, cheese and crackers, cookies. We Assistants all talk about how relieved we are to be finishing, about how we'll finally be able to get to work on our research projects, how we won't be constantly beeped for disasters on the floor, elopements, patients assaulting nurses. It's a nice feeling. We talk about our plans for next year—practice, fellowships, jobs. I'll be at Columbia. I realize I've gotten through it all without any disasters—no suicides, nothing awful. And in a few months more, all of Residency will be over. Incredible. Even Victor seems relaxed for once.

Later that afternoon, while I'm cleaning out my office, the nurses' station pages me.

"We can't find Ellie," Roberta says. "We need orders on one of her patients. Can you come over?"

"Damn it! Isn't anyone else around?"

"I really think you should come."

I leave the piles of books and journals and case notes spread on the floor, and go out to the nurses' station. Everyone's crowded in there, including Roberta and Dr. Blanding and the nurses and the social workers, and Ronald and Ann and Lazlo, and when I open the door I see there's cake and fruit and wine and all that spread out on top of the chart rack.

"Where *is* Ellie?" I say.

No one knows. The party is practically over before Ellie shows up.

"Sorry I'm late," she says. "I've been working on my new admission."

"Did Tina get off all right?"

"Yeah, fine." Ellie seems distracted. She spills wine all over the chart rack, and we all back away and throw our paper napkins on the puddle, which drips down over the charts.

"Good job," I say.

"Thanks." She bunches the wet napkins together.

"So now you'll get a new Assistant to break in," I say.

"I'm not looking forward to it," she says. "It took me six months to straighten you out."

Her beeper goes off: the record room wants her *stat.*

"Oh damn! I forgot to sign the discharge order," she says. "I'll be right back."

Everyone else scatters, going off to see their last patients of the day. After awhile—Ellie's disappeared again—I go back to my office. It's dark by the time I finish moving out. □

THE LITERARY LIFE

A North American Memoir: Revenge

CLARK BLAISE

I was in Lillian's Restaurant in Saratoga Springs, New York, on the night of my fortieth birthday, eating ice cream with some of the most admired names in American letters. Skidmore College and *Salmagundi* magazine had sponsored a giant symposium on the state of American Culture Today. Susan Sontag was there, Dwight McDonald, Stanley Kaufmann, an absent-but-very-present George Steiner (his paper had been the keynote speech), and my partner over birthday ice cream was Cynthia Ozick. My wife, Bharati, was teaching that year at Skidmore and I was visiting from Toronto, where I was a Professor of Humanities at York University. Sometime later that fall we would complete the immigration process; just like my parents, I would become a Resident Alien. Unlike them, however, I would become an immigrant into my native country. Our uncertain years were just beginning; never knowing from one year to the next where we would be, and how we would survive. Cynthia Ozick, in her artfully unassertive, elegantly naive way, asked, "Mr. Blaise, why do you write?"

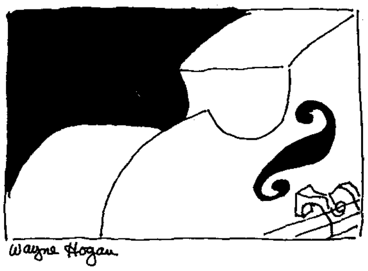
"Revenge," I said.

The time of my fortieth birthday was one of the lowest points in my life. We had left a failing, autumnal Montreal in 1978 for pulsating Toronto, the city of dreams and promise. The "Miss Teen Canada" of cities, all glitter, drive and self-absorption. We'd bought a rundown rowhouse in central Toronto and immediately joined the civic obsession of remodeling. My job at York University was a revelation of what the rest of the academic world considered barely tolerable. The rest of the academic world had not been teaching day and night for a dozen years at an open-enrollment institution in English-Montreal.

Toronto is one of the jewels of the continent. Montreal is now all weary grace for English-speakers, gray and Viennese after its naughty youth; Toronto is all glass and chrome and high-tech studios. In the Canadian context it is New York and Los Angeles combined (though it reminds me most of the new Atlanta—a city of new money and vigor anxious to erase an embarrassing past). We'd been swept up in it for the first few months, feeling somehow we'd climbed the pinnacle. Our sons were happy; they were finally going to school in English.

Then the old Toronto struck us down. Old Toronto under the glowing studio-tan; the crusty, intolerant, narrow, self-righteous Toronto of Atwood's novels and the southern Ontario suspiciousness of Alice Munro's stories, mixed with a new urban phenomenon imported from working-class England: a nasty and unapologetic form of racism, with East Indians ("Pakis") as the primary target.

The turmoils of linguistic confrontation and self-determination in Montreal seemed by comparison noble and progressive—part of contemporary civilization, at the very least. Clean, progressive, proud, "good" Toronto, the center of Canadian arts and prosperity, the articulator of Canadian-ness to the rest of the country, became a city of medieval backwardness and almost daily confrontation. Bharati came to know the special form of outrage described by V. S. Naipaul—a line of indignation that easily understands the low brutality of simple racism, but suffers the special torture of profound disillusionment.



Not, "how dare they?", but "how dare they *presume*? . . ." A forty-year-old citizen—full professor, mother of teen-agers, Guggenheim fellow, honored author—does not appreciate being taken off hotel elevators as a common hooker, nor having her purse opened by department-store detectives. She expects normal service when her number comes up, and she resents being taken as a maid by door-to-door salesmen, or propositioned by high school boys in subway stations. Perhaps most of all, she resents being assumed by her fellow Canadian authors to be an Indian writer in some obscure "Indian dialect." (Europeans speak languages; Third Worlders speak dialects).

I know; I have been presumptuous. Toronto is so beautiful, the kids were so happy, *I*, goddammit, was so happy—it'll pass; it has to.

Self-righteousness begins at home. What I was slow to understand was that the government, the Liberal government of Pierre Trudeau, the self-proclaimed protectors of all ethnic Canadians against old-line Tory intransigence, had done everything it could to encourage an anti-Asian backlash. It was the Liberal government that had floated a "Green Paper" on Canada's demographic future, inviting the whole country to participate in an apparently open debate on its multi-cultural and multi-racial destiny. "What kind of country do we want?" it had asked, citing statistics to show that the traditional sources of immigration were drying up and that population growth for the rest of the century was likely to come from 747s disgorging Punjabi villages, Hong Kong junks, and hordes of smiling West Indians. From talk-shows to subway incidents, the answer from white Canadians came through, unmistakably.

We were asked to write a TV play on the subject of "Paki-bashing" in Toronto. The clipping service sent us reports of hundreds of separate incidents, hundreds of separate lives disrupted. We interviewed the more famous victims, attended borough meetings where white citizens, many with accents, stood up to denounce their fellow brown Canadians.

"My father fought for the King," cried one impassioned old man.

"So did mine," retorted a Sikh restaurateur.

"We came here for freedom," intoned an Austrian woman; "now that freedom is being taken from us!"

What Bharati learned, in talking to dozens of Indian immigrants in Toronto, was that everyone had stories, each had suffered "incidents," from skull-fractures to being spat upon; the differences lay in forms of retaliation (young Sikhs with cricket bats), or silent withdrawal. Very few had the option of getting out; those who had it, we found, were exercising it.

Skidmore College offered us an alternating professorship, which we accepted. Bharati taught there in 1979-80, and 1981-82; I taught in 1980-81, and 1982-83. In between, we were both offered visiting terms at the Writers' Workshop in Iowa, and gradually the family grew accustomed to the charms of Iowa and the energies so unique to Iowa City. We resigned our job and bought the house where, I'm told, John Irving wrote *Garp*.

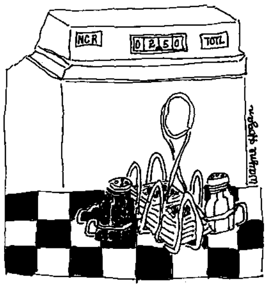
"Revenge," I said to Cynthia Ozick that night in Saratoga Springs, "for all that is silent, ignorant, and superstitious in my background." That's nothing on the order of Ozick's vengeance, I know, but her question had surprised me with its directness, and so had my answer. My father died while we lived in Toronto; our younger son become diabetic, and we grew disillusioned with our adopted country: I write to give my father his voice and as a response to the pain of an innocent's illness and my powerlessness to change a thing, and from the shock of contending with such a medieval situation as race-hate in our time and place. I will write, henceforth, from the depths of uncertainty over job, country, city, and the uncertainty over my talent and even my short-range future.

I have seen my mother reduced to a cipher and starving to death in a nursing home (it's no one's fault; she can't remember, or anticipate, hunger; everything served is a shock and she can only take a spoonful before forgetting that it's there for her, and that it's *meant* to be hot, or cold, or salty, or sweet), and I remember my grandfather in his last years, and I know the story of my great-grandfather, the master carpenter who worked on the interior of the Manitoba Parliament buildings. Alzheimered-out, all of them. I was the kid who once knew everything, who memorized every county and every county-seat in America, just because they were there. I trusted my memory the way a salesman trusts his smile, and I know now it too is fallible.

My God, I'm fallible. Not only fallible, but past forty and failing. The past five years have seen the crumbling of so much confidence it's hard even to remember what easy success, total recall, and optimism were like.

I have been trying to find the center of my imagination. Where does the impulse come from, and why does the voice and shape and subject-matter after twenty years remain the same? Why the first-person narrator, why the child and adolescent character, why the adult looking back? Why the relative silence on marriage and fatherhood, the scarcity of relationships, the elevation of the private and psychological over the social and political? Why am I wedded like a reborn Wordsworth to the epic of my own becoming, the origins of a calling, the hints of a talent? Why are most of my narrators themselves writers? I am like a dog tied to a post and then forgotten; I have sniffed every inch of my turf, I've dug it up, I've soiled it, I've hounded my life for meaning as though it were somehow prototypical, epic and exemplary, rather than sheltered, eccentric and utterly accidental.

I'm not a natural writer, not if I understand the childhood of most authors. I was cut out to be something else, but I never discovered what it was. My childhood reading wasn't anything like a normal author's. I've read essays by Graham Greene, Forster, Sartre, and Waugh; I've read Quentin Bell's biography of Virginia Woolf, Edel's biographies of Henry James, and Gay Wilson Allen's of William James, and in all of them (and dozens more—I love literary biographies) I'm intimidated by what those children had already read by the age of eight or nine. "I suppose it was in my eighth summer, entranced by Gibbon . . ." or "My sisters and I performed little *commedia dell'arte* inspired indirectly by Juvenal . . ." Latin chronicles, the standard biographies, Shakespeare, and the nineteenth-century French, English and Russian masters. They never wasted a minute trying to convince themselves they were normal. Did they fish, listen to baseball and football, stand in front of a radio taking their cuts with every reported pitch? In the rural Georgia and Florida schools that I first attended, an inclination to read might have revealed a reckless disregard for survival.



There was only one book in my life, at least up to the age of twelve, and that was the Atlas. From it I typed out, at the age of seven and eight, a 120-page compilation of all the salient descriptive facts about the surface of the earth. By six I had known all the state and provincial capitals (thanks to maps my mother hung in the kitchens of those steamy sub-tropical apartments) and I would cut my meat and bite my Graham Crackers in the shapes of states and countries (one big bite from the corner of a double Graham gives you an accurate Idaho); by seven I'd added the world capitals; by eight *all* the cities in the world (1930 census, alas) with over fifty thousand people; by nine I knew all the counties and their seats, and by ten I had abandoned the Atlas for world and country maps of my own invention, hand-painted with invented mountain ranges, cities, and rivers, all very precisely named in languages of my own invention which borrowed heavily from Polish. I made up lists of new mountains and rivers and cities, and memorized *their* heights, lengths, and populations.

Of course I think of it now as an artist's natural evolution from passionate but passive observation and unconscious mimicry, through to the creation of personal mythology. I was

TAKE CARE OF YOUR LUNGS. THEY'RE ONLY HUMAN.

Now, honey, you listen to Pearl. This year, do yourself and your friends a real favor. Support Christmas Seals. They help fight lung disease, and remind everybody to take care of their lungs. When you support Christmas Seals and use them on your holiday cards and packages, it *really* shows you care.

Love Pearl Bailey

AMERICAN LUNG ASSOCIATION®
The Christmas Seal People®

Space contributed by the publisher as a public service.

helpless before facts of any kind—I did the same with a handbook of Florida fishes, with my mother's old Canadian bird-guides, with star-charts, with baseball stats, car-models, French, German and English monarchs, Atomic weights and the periodic table.

The other book of my childhood and adolescence was the twelve-volume *Collier's Encyclopedia,* which I read through perhaps twice a year. I was told it contained everything known by man, which I must have considered advantageous to the omniphile I hoped to become. I was especially interested in calculating how old famous people had been when they died. I remember thinking that I, born in 1940, would probably live to see the next century, but that my parents, born in 1903 and 1905, would not—what does it do to a life, knowing that one century would totally contain it? I compared myself with others born in 1840—would I be a burn-out before the century turned? Or should I wait, hold back my energies, until the new century released them? I was the kind of kid (I'm sure there are many) who was taken to his first movie in Atlanta in 1945 and shouted out, "What'll that company call itself in the year two thousand?" Such long-scale worries! Such belief in my immortality!

Even at eight or nine I could not imagine living a life that would not someday be glorified in the encyclopedia. This may be arrogance and ego; it may also be revenge.

The cataclysm in my life was my parents' divorce. Absurd, I know; it was the most predictable of occurrences and it happened late enough in my life—nineteen—when all parental obligations had been met. Yet, however calmly and maturely I took it, and however cordial and correct I remained with my father, I realize that I never accepted it, never forgave it, never really survived it. Their divorce formed a knot in my character; my life collapsed around it like a compacted star, and the density of that black hole will warp my work till I die.

I am comfortable with adolescent characters not because of lack of interest in adults or inexperience in life, or attraction to the teen-ager *per se,* but because I am dependent on a world made explicable by my mismatched parents in their desperate marriage. So long as they are together, all things are possible. Their absurd incongruity calls up, and somehow justifies, the harshest and most beautiful images from my experience and out of my imagination. I write from an undisclosed adult perspective at a point in time after their break-up, looking back to a time before it happened, when the potential for divorce, the *logic* for divorce, the *imperative* for divorce, was temporarily set aside. Even when their divorce is not mentioned, it is the sub-text, the precondition, the "big truth," behind the story.

Every writer has his or her own big truth, serving Hemingway like the nihilism of the Great War, or Faulkner like the sin of slavery, or Nabokov like the expulsion from Russia, or the Holocaust—a suppressed wound. The bigger the truth the better the fiction (alas); mine is the stuff of ninety percent of young people, unless enhanced. Life without my parents' unspoken, unacted, erotic violence is literally unimaginable to me, just as life *after* their divorce seems somehow absurd, lacking in pain, tolerance, and moral authority.

I need the shelter of their marriage; their complications and polarities—they are still the food-source of what Edwin Honig has referred to as their "aging embryo." They are the heavens and the landscape of my imagination, the indispensable maps leading north and south into French and the Prairies and even to Europe. They are endlessly available and compliant; they survive their various transmutations, yet remain for me forever pure and unknowable. They are the light source, the solar energy to my lunar self; they keep me not quite Modern and combatively at odds with the meta-literatures and fabulations that too often announce the exhaustion of the avant-garde. I want literature to teach me about life, not about itself.

That still does not explain the *source* of imagery, and for that I can only turn to water. Bodies of fresh water in Florida and Canada have had a parenting effect on my imagination. I grew up on the wild shores of Lake Harris and Like Griffin in central Florida, back in a time when they were utterly savage. Somehow, I ingested the sights and smells of putrescence, and of primordial, unspoiled plentitude that has now vanished from the common experience, even of Floridians. Harry Crews in *A Childhood* and Frank Conroy in *Stop-Time* have written of it, but the home of all such imagery is probably Africa, Latin America, and the Caribbean. We have seen a touch of the living prehistory of the planet, and a triggering of the brain's own disremembered past.

It seemed that any casual, quiet moment by the shore would yield encounters with every exuberant class of the vertebrate world: birds, fish, mammal and reptile, in no clear hierarchy of viciousness. All we were missing were piranha fish. When the sun penetrated the lake surface in a band of intense green light, I'd see monster bass, larger gar and gators, enormous softshell turtles, drift across from the shadows. I knew the universe was teeming with monsters and that they were hidden and I knew it from the age of six.

I remember even now a spectacle that belongs in Bosch. Dozens of mudfish nailed by their tails to cypress trees in front of a moss-picker's shanty. Those fish, their primitive lungs permitting life out of water for days at a time, whacking the trees with their heads, their air-bladders making Donald Duck noises, while sand-castle drippings of black mud built up under their propped-open mouths.

And so the images of the unconscious were planted early and privately by the peculiar wealth of Southern poverty, and I grew to believe in the co-existence, or the simultaneity, of visible and occult worlds: duplicities, masks, hidden selves, discarded languages, altered names, things not being what they seemed. Add to that the continual moves—thirty before the eighth grade—the social adjustments to new schools and new cities every few months, the tension of my parents' marriage, and the gifted memory, and the ego-thrust towards immortal vengeance, and you have the formative, pre-literate experience of an eventual artist (if lucky), or a functional neurotic. It still took a series of fortunate accidents and gifted teachers to coax the writer from all that unformed, possibly poisonous sludge.

I began to write from a desire to impress my experience—to avenge myself—on the blank understanding of my fellow undergraduates at Denison University. I had known a

NEW in the Pitt Poetry Series

BLACK BRANCHES
Greg Pape *$12.95 cloth, $6.95 paper*
"Everything Pape touches *matters*. Poems such as 'Black Branches' and 'Dolorosa, St. Cecilia and the Night' . . . are masterpieces."—Larry Levis.
February 1984

BLUE LIKE THE HEAVENS: NEW AND SELECTED POEMS
Gary Gildner *$14.95 cloth, $6.95 paper*
"A consistently fresh and lively selection . . . full of energy, and great fun to read."—*Library Journal*
April 1984

THE WHITE WAVE
Kate Daniels *$12.95 cloth, $6.95 paper*
Winner of the 1983 Starrett Poetry Prize for a first book of poems.
"*The White Wave* introduces us to a brave and honest and compassionate poet."—Stanley Kunitz.
June 1984

BLACK HAIR
Gary Soto *$12.95 cloth, $6.95 paper*
"An extraordinary poetic talent."—*American Book Review*
January 1985

LETTERS FROM THE FLOATING WORLD: NEW AND SELECTED POEMS
Siv Cedering *$14.95 cloth, $6.95 paper*
"A writer of exquisite craft, a celebrant of the joy of the body, of sexuality, of women's needs."—*Publishers Weekly*.
October 1984

Available at your bookseller or call toll free 800-638-3030 (Maryland residents phone 301-824-7300).

University of Pittsburgh Press
Pittsburgh, PA 15260

Coming in March:

The
170th Anniversary Number
of the NAR

Including fiction by Stephen Dixon, Karen Snow,
Annette Sanford, Jeanne Wilmot & Gary Gildner;
non-fiction by Conger Beasley, Jr.,
Scott Russell Sanders & Kenneth Lash;
poetry by Roger Weingarten & Stuart Friebert,
and drawings by M. Kasper and Cor Hoekstra

time and place in America—the deep South of the mid-to-late '40s—that was already history. I had been let out of school to watch Klan floggings and cross-burnings. I'd seen a lynching, or rather, a post-lynching. I had attended segregated schools in a county seventy percent black, and I had seen alligators and manatees, pumas, chain-gangs, share-croppers, moss-pickers, and I had attended school with morons and been doused with delousing powder and had my feet swabbed with carbolic acid for hookworms and had my hair shaved for ringworm.

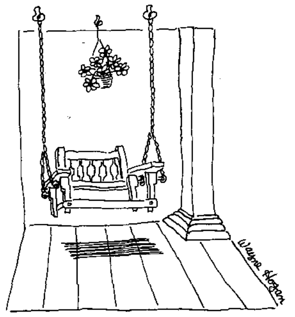
In the beginning, then, I thought of myself purely as a Southern writer on the basis of five potent years in my life—ages six through ten—spent in the swamplands and hamlets of north-central Florida. Faulkner was my guide; his language, his evocation of doom, of age, of the implacable determinants of race, class and history. My small world fit perfectly in the Yoknapatawpha legend; I had seen all the same types, gone to schools with them, spoken like them, seen the towns with their statues to the Confederate dead, been dismissed from school for Confederate Memorial Day and Jeff Davis's Birthday, and listened to my teachers' rapturous litanies on the sins, lineage, probable insanity, and vile practices of the arch-villain, Abraham Lincoln. We'd been given little Confederate flags at school so we could line the streets of Leesburg at night, cheering the unmasked parade of the Klan and the motorcade they led as it proceeded to Venetian Gardens, a doubleheader, and the crowning of the Watermelon Queen. Where are you now, Dolly Beard, Watermelon Queen of 1948, senior at Leesburg High?

And like a child out of Faulkner, or Rawlings, or Willie Morris, or Harry Crews and so many others (I realize the South was its own intact empire; the songs and the practices and the foods and accents were universal, from Arkansas to South Carolina) I had roamed woods, fished, played, and slumbered in the midst of a tropical torpor that was also a tropical maelstrom. I remember years, it seems now, of retiring to a screened-in porch with nothing but a Coke and the radio playing "The Game of the Day" from somewhere up north, but I also recall the furies of Florida: hurricanes, the scream of a mountain-lion, the thrashing of a gator just under a rotten pier, the braiding of water-moccasins in my path. I remember the floating balls of squirming catfish larvae, and trying to break them up with a flick of my pole. I remember trailing an enormous woodpecker so deep into cypress swamps that I was knee-deep in warm water with no path out, and the bird—maybe a classifiably extinct Ivory-Billed, but probably an equally-impressive Pileated—was tapping above me while gators whistled nearby and deer could be heard plunging into deeper water than surrounded me.

I understood those favorite words of Faulkner, and I used them myself: *deep, beyond, further.* It was Faulkner, to his glory, the divine and sometimes tangled rhetorician, who had the faith and the tact to title a story simply and forever, "Was." It is a title for a collective experience of story-telling.

In February, 1962, I entered the Writers' Workshop. My first night in town, Paul Engle, the Director, invited me up for drinks. His other guest was Bharati Mukherjee, the writer from Calcutta. Miss Mukherjee was dazzling in a sari: poised, non-drinking, very British. I can't remember if we talked at all. One no more spoke to Miss Mukherjee than one spray-painted the Taj Mahal. She was so formal, so proper, so beautiful, I thought of her name as Miss Missmukherjee.

I knew nothing of India, cared little for it, and settled in for a long Iowa winter of serious writing on little money. Philip Roth was my teacher, and the classes contained some of the serious fiction writers, particularly short story writers, of the next two decades, like Raymond Carver, Andre Dubus, Phil O'Connor, John Yount, Joy Williams, Jim Crumley, Ted Weesner, Mark Costello, Paul Friedman, Dave Godfrey and Frank Chin. The poets were Mark Strand, Charles Wright, Marvin Bell and Jim Tate.



There was talent and ambition and pretension, too, all in outsize batches. And despair. We were the Iowa generation immediately before the Golden Era of John Irving and Tom McHale, Asa Babar and Nicholas Meyer, just before the time when New York agents and editors and California producers started breaking their bi-coastal journeys in Iowa City in order to sign on new talent. Ours were still the literary-quarterly years, the years of reading the small magazines and shaping our stories to *Shenandoah's* needs, when fiction writers envied poets their relative fame and income. I remember a night in Kenny's Bar, when Paul Friedman said the best writer in America was a philosophy professor at Purdue, and Ray Carver countered that *he* knew the best: a medievalist at Chico State. William Gass and John Gardner had not yet published their first books. Four years later, workshop *students* had three-book contracts and six-figure paperback deals. To have been a mediocre talent in those years must have been humiliating.

But in 1962 it was still a quiet time of deep cold and serious ambition, when all the world was writing and all your friends were as good or maybe better than you were, and you couldn't afford to let up a minute. I remember summer nights in Iowa City, taking a walk at three A.M. in the eighty-five degree heat, and hearing the flood of language chatter from attic typewriters, and I would cut the walk short, go back to my own apartment and work till dawn. All those thousands of pages! Lost! Awful!! What madness was it?

And I remember a night in Iowa in 1963 in the early fall, just weeks after I'd married Miss Mukherjee, walking down to the post office to send off yet another rejectable Southern story to the *New Yorker* (in Iowa, a finished story could not languish even five minutes on your desk, no matter what the hour; the world would not forgive the delay), and having it come to me that crazy as they are, *these* are the happy years in my life, when everything I write is perceptibly better than the thing before, when no one expects anything from me, when my future is still unformed and I cannot say where I will be in a year's time and I can afford to sneer at the inevitable rejection slip and say to my friends in the bar, *It says more about them than it does about me.* ☐

From Beowulf to Virginia Woolf

An Astounding and Wholly Unauthorized
History of English Literature
New Edition,
Thoroughly Devised and Diffusely Illustrated

Robert Manson Myers

Illustration by Edward Gorey

Just when you thought academia was safe again for some high-minded seriousness, Robert Manson Myers's classic bit of tomfoolery comes leaping back to life with one of the funniest parodies of English literature and the English profession ever written.

First published in the early Fifties, and long out of print, this comic gem (the literary equivalent of *1066 and All That*) has been both revised and enlarged and is even more resoundingly obtuse than the original. With eloquent irrelevance, the author presents the definitive survey of the wolf motif in English literature. He chronicles "the unspeakable literary contribution of the British Empire before and since the publication of *Lyrical Ballast* in 1798" and, following a roughly chronological scheme, "analyzes the One Hundred and One Best Poets against the hysterical background of their time."

"*From Beowulf to Virginia Woolf* has achieved the status of a kind of underground classic. You can't find it in libraries (the copies have all been stolen). Rereading it, I was once again in uncontrollable stitches." – Charles R. Larson, author of *Academia Nuts*. Clothbound. Illustrated. $9.95

The 1984 Illinois Short Fiction Collections

Bodies of the Rich, *by John J. Clayton.* "John Clayton's stories crackle with a kind of electricity rare in contemporary fiction: here's a writer who handles the language with energy and daring, who at the same time presents us with characters deeply involved in human concerns that matter to them and to us." – George Cuomo, author of *Family Honor*. "A fine collection." – *Publishers Weekly*.

Music Lesson, *by Martha Lacy Hall.* "In the tradition of Welty, Percy and other interpreters of regional lifestyle, Hall replicates the idiom and behavior of people through the microcosm of their daily lives. . . . With unobtrusive craftsmanship, Hall mines the rich material of the Deep South, joining the formidable ranks of Southern artists." – *Publishers Weekly*.

Fetching the Dead, *by Scott R. Sanders.* "Sanders takes us into the world of fallen people. . . . His narrative rendering of these people trying to find some shelter in their hapless lives is seamless and strong." – *Publishers Weekly*. "All these stories are deep rooted in place and deeply felt and thought; and 'The Fire Woman' especially rings like crystal in the mind." – Ursula K. Le Guin, author of *The Earthsea Trilogy*.

Some of the Things I Did Not Do, *by Janet Beeler Shaw.* "Ten marvelous stories. . . . Sensitive to the dilemmas of both men and women, Shaw creates highly believable dramas, as full of suspense as of closely observed detail." – *Publishers Weekly*. "In all the stories here Shaw is impressive with her natural, seemingly effortless style – which remains in fine control through an engagingly wide variety of subject matters." – *Kirkus Reviews*.

Clothbound, $11.95 each

We accept major credit cards.
Phone toll free 800 / 638-3030.
Maryland residents phone 301 / 824-7300.

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS PRESS
54 E. Gregory Drive, Champaign, IL 61820

Illinois Short Fiction

PERRY GLASSER

Bodies of the Rich, by John J. Clayton.
Music Lesson, by Martha Lacy Hall.
Fetching the Dead, by Scott R. Sanders.
Some of the Things I Did Not Do, by Janet Beeler Shaw
University of Illinois. $11.95 each

The four volumes that are the subject of this column are this year's quartet from the University of Illinois Press's Short Fiction Series. This is the ninth set of collections published, making thirty-six volumes in all. This year each book is hardbound, each is approximately the same length, each is printed in the same typeface, each takes its title from one story in the collection, and each has the identical blurbs on the back of the dust cover. The blurbs do not praise the work of the writer the reader has in hand, or even the work of writers that have previously been published by the series, but are quotations from various reviews praising the Short Fiction Series. Thus the appearance of these books seems less a celebration of the work of four writers than a celebration of the series itself, a kind of publisher's narcissism. Thirty-six collections of short fiction make a fair sized forest, and being unable to see the trees becomes likely. The editors might consider varying the design of the books in future years, for while the Illinois Short Fiction Series has provided a valuable service by bringing us the work of some fine writers, the series may also be doing a disservice to its authors by suggesting that the fiction contained in these volumes is interchangeably generic. Read any one, and you've read 'em all.

Happily, that is not the case.

John J. Clayton writes baby-boomer fiction. In *Bodies of the Rich* the concerns and assumptions of people who came of age in the late 'sixties and early 'seventies, those now feeling the Big Chill, is the stuff from which most of these seven stories are made. In "An Old 3 A.M. Story" an estranged couple are together again briefly at Christmas, the slightly dotty wife back up from New York. to Cambridge to re-establish her relationship with her children, perhaps to take her daughter with her when she returns to New York. The husband, an overworked carpenter who has been alone with his two children, can't find the proper emotional responses. Hope? Resentment? The couple sleeps together. The mother returns to the city by herself. There is a story titled "Part-time Father"; the title tells all. "Cambridge Is Sinking!" chronicles the end of the 'sixties (on our psychological calendars, and in the story, a moment sometime in 1973). No more dope in Harvard Yard. No more red flags. No marches. People are actually planning to make a *living* as teachers, working at the food co-op, or borrowing money from uncles in order to open "very hip" bookstores in Vermont. It's just no fun reading Trotsky and Mao any more. A fellow named Steve wonders "whether to go on for his doctorate in sociology so he could be unemployed as a Ph.D. instead of unemployed as an M.A." In "Fantasy for a Friday Afternoon" a high school teacher in western Massachusetts is fed up and nearly runs off with a sixteen-year old; instead he talks her into going home. Then in something of a blind rage the teacher and his wife load their Saab "with luggage, baby gear, toys, dresses hanging over the rear seat, Sara in the carseat, Jamie giggling with excitement," and they lug it all to Boston. If you're in your mid-thirties or early forties and finished college fifteen years ago, you're the right age and class. You know these people.

Well, the book is printed on acid-free paper, and maybe that means something, too.

If all this seems like familiar ground that is because it is, but Clayton saves the material from tiresome redundancy by writing so well and resisting any kind of sentimentality. The title story, "Bodies of the Rich," is exceptionally fine because there the author brings his considerable powers to a different form and subject. He manages to tell this story of class differences, adultery, and budding sexuality as a memoir. In a memoir, the adult voice that already understands the greater significance of the events described cannot be allowed to overwhelm the more naive perceptions of the child remembered. It takes a good deal of control to write with success:

> She wore a white bathing suit that was almost a bikini. This was ten, fifteen years before bikinis came to the United States; maybe I'm remembering badly. Could I really have seen the bony points of her hips, the cleft of her full breasts, even her belly button? I saw the other women around the pool look up and stare. Resenting. But she smiled, self-consciously, blissfully, as if to say, My, my, what a lovely day! She was the first mother I'd ever seen that was beautiful. Not beautiful, really: a sweet-faced, slightly fleshy woman. Beautiful isn't the point. *Sexual.* Mothers were never sexual. Mothers were mothers.

Clayton works with this form wonderfully well, and "Bodies of the Rich" is a compelling, charming story, written with the kind of complete control that leaves the writer invisible. Clayton's prose is spare, lean and workmanlike. This is life closely and honestly observed, and the graceful writing makes *Bodies of the Rich* a pleasure to read.

The pleasures of reading Martha Lacy Hall are very different. *Music Lesson* is a collection of ten stories all set in the deep South, a region less indentifiable on a map than it is as a literary terrain. For Martha Lacy Hall that terrain is defined by voice, the sound and manner in which a story is told. The Southern voice in these stories is relaxed and conversational, well aware that the meaning of experience can be best known only if a narrative has a context. Characters in these stories do not arise, confront problems, act with or without success, and then neatly close their lives before us as they fade from the page, but instead are delivered to us with years of history molded by the eccentricities and specialness of a place. As a consequence, many of these stories are relatively static and little "happens" in the sense of dramatic interaction. In "Doll," for example, the surface action of the story consists of no more than a traveling woman's brief stop at a geriatric home to visit her childhood neighbor and piano teacher. In the title story, "Music Lesson," a woman at the bedside of her husband who has recently suffered a heart attack decides to sell her Steinway piano. In "Privacy," along with the first person narrator we eavesdrop on the conversations of some neighbors, thereby learning of illicit relationships of long standing.

This potentially lifeless material is saved by Hall's strong southern voice. Not told to us in a direct manner, the narratives slide forward and backward in time as the central consciousness of a piece recounts habitual action, remembered conversations, local gossip, and like an impressionistic painter the author supplies us with those striking details of setting that make firm in our minds a place. Martha Lacy Hall's South is a world filled with flowers—zinnias, crape myrtle, shasta daisies, wisteria, magnolias and geraniums—county courthouses, porch swings, and settees. To appreciate the world created by this sliding non-linear narrative requires a patient and attentive reader, because these stories not only delineate place, but point up the mystery and contradictions of character as well. All of these virtues come together especially successfully in one story, "The Visit."

"The Visit" is told from the point of view of a college student from Chicago who on a weekend in November visits her roommate's home in Mississippi. The outsider tells us, "[e]verything seemed to date from the Civil War, seventy-eight years after Appomattox." (I'll do the addition for you—it's 1943.) The roommate's father is a judge, and the weekend likely will be marred by the scheduled execution of a black man for murder. Not many people seem overly perturbed by this; the girls discuss the relative merits of electrocution versus cyanide gas, and the judge regrets the man was not charged with manslaughter. He is reluctant to call the governor and ask for a stay because his and the governor's politics differ. Now if you are a knee-jerk northern liberal, you might expect this story to resolve itself along predictable patterns, but Martha Lacy Hall is a spokesperson for the decency and dignity of her people. The judge finally makes the phone call and reports:

> [The governor] let me talk my head off, really beg, before he told me he'd granted a stay a few minutes ago. He's going to review the transcript, he said. That boy will never go to the chair.

Yet the story is no fairy-tale of the South, either. Martha Lacy Hall is no apologist. Her view of the South is unrelentingly honest.

The point of these stories is always the revelation of character. Though they are mostly set in Mississippi during the Depression or the early years of the Second World War, the reader searching for the ghosts of William Faulkner or Flannery O'Connor will not find them, for Martha Lacy Hall has her own notions of what a story should be. If we allow ourselves to be patient, the voice always takes us on a journey into the mystery of human nature, the contradictions of the heart. The pace may not please some, but the richness of the stories should please most.

The copyright page of *Fetching the Dead* indicates that the eight stories in Scott R. Sanders's collection were written during a span of eleven years, from 1970 to 1981, and that Scott R. Sanders was born in 1945. It is therefore not surprising that these stories vary greatly in terms of their emotional pitch and their degree of craft. Perhaps more surprising is to read a contemporary fiction writer who attempts to create archetypes rather than characters who are permitted to be flesh and blood, but the surprise diminishes if we notice from the dust jacket flyleaf that Sanders is also the author of a critical study of D.H. Lawrence, and finally the surprise gives way to disappointment. In story after story we meet strong female characters who nurture their weaker men, rescuing them from some ill-defined spiritual malaise. "The Recovery of Vision" and "The Cry" are identically structured and plotted. In the first, a young couple on a tight budget is touring Edinburgh; in the second, a young couple on a tight budget is touring Madrid. In the first, the young man is suffering from an eye infection; in the second, the young man is recovering from "a nearly fatal bout of pneumonia." In both stories, the young woman is sensitive to the unspoken needs of the young man. In both stories, the couple walks about a European city, and that walk corresponds to the spiritual journey of the young man. And in both stories, the young woman finally shares her strength with her young man in a moment that can only be called "cosmic." Compare:

> And through a haze he glimpsed the fiery landscape, the blazing eye. The earth and sun and sky were all one liquid flame. Sierra's face was tilted up close to his, watching him watch the sun. Her hood was thrown back, and the light streaming through her hair made her seem molten. And he also felt molten, yielded up, set free. ("The Recovery of Vision")

and

> I wanted to cry out in my own terror—*Don't let me grow old, don't let me die.* But I held my tongue. The chafe of loving still warmed my chest. My body denied its death. In the dark I reached for Brenda, to lay my hand on her stomach as it rose and fell, and in the dark I found her, there she was, the earth. ("The Cry")

Sanders relies too much on metaphor, as opposed to action or character, to make what can only be called his Lawrencian points. What does it tell us to say of a character who has been deserted by a woman that "[h]e was a moon without a planet, wobbling in a crazy orbit about a vacuum"? Why describe an act of love as "dancing slowly to the music of our blood"? A reader only stops to untangle the meaning of "[s]tars of pain floated like great water-lilies in Jesse's mind." The only rationale for this kind of writing is to force characters, action, and language to conform to a predetermined notion of the nature of things, and in many of these stories that notion seems second-hand.

STATEMENT OF OWNERSHIP, MANAGEMENT AND CIRCULATION

(Required by 39 U.S.C. 3685)

1. Title of publication: The North American Review

1a. Publication No. 0029-2397

2. Date of filing: September 30, 1984

3. Frequency of issue: Quarterly (March, June, September, December)

3a. No. of issues published annually: 4

3b. Annual subscription price: $9.00

4. Complete mailing address of known office of publication: 1222 West 27th Street, Cedar Falls, Iowa 50614

5. Complete mailing address of headquarters or general business offices of the publishers:
1222 West 27th St., Cedar Falls, Iowa 50614

6. Full names and complete mailing addresses of publisher, editor, and managing editor:

Publisher: University of Northern Iowa
1222 West 27th St., Cedar Falls, Iowa 50614

Editor: Robley Wilson, Jr.
1222 West 27th St., Cedar Falls, Iowa 50614

Managing editor: Sandra Witt
1222 West 27th St., Cedar Falls, Iowa 50614

7. Owner: University of Northern Iowa
1222 West 27th St., Cedar Falls, Iowa 50614

8. Known bondholders, mortgagees, and other security holders owning or holding 1 percent or more of total amount of bonds, mortgages or other securities: None

9. The purpose, function, and nonprofit status of this organization and the exempt status for Federal income tax purposes have not changed during the proceeding 12 months.

10. Extent and nature of circulation

	Average no. copies each issue during preceding 12 mo.	Single issue nearest to filing date
A. Total no. copies printed (Net press run)	5358	4900
B. Paid circulation		
1. Sales through dealers and carriers, street vendors and counter sales	1437	2326
2. Mail subscriptions	2431	1982
C. Total paid circulation	3868	4308
D. Free distribution by mail, carrier or other means, samples, complimentary, and other free copies	91	64
E. Total distribution (sum of C and D)	3959	4372
F. Copies not distributed		
1. Office use, left-over, unaccounted, spoiled after printing	136	354
2. Returns from news agents	1263	174
G. Total (sum of E and F — should equal net press run shown in A)	5358	4900

I certify that the statements made by me above are correct and complete.

(signature) **Robley Wilson, Jr., Editor**

---

*

Delicacy of voice, grace in metaphor, adept characterization, and precision in observation are some of the virtues we look for when we read fiction, but the quality that truly lets us know we are in the presence of a fine writer is wisdom. We can be amazed by a nine-year-old violinist, be in awe of a ten-year-old chess master, shake our heads in wonder at the courage and suppleness of a teen-aged gymnast, but there are no child prodigies in literary art. When we read fiction we expect technical expertise (and likely take it for granted), but with our very best writers we expect something more, some seasoning of the spirit, some special intimacy with human nature. Reading the ten stories in *Some of the Things I Did Not Do* we sense that we are in the presence of a writer whose talents transcend the mere pleasures of craft. Here is a writer with not only a great gift for language, but a writer with that calm wisdom that manifests itself as compassion. Janet Beeler Shaw is a writer who *knows* things.

Lina Jean, a young mother of an illegitimate child in "Love and Other Lessons," falls in love at first sight with a Catholic priest. He loans her a book.

> He underlined everything he read, he told her—yellow for agreement, blue for possible sermon material. In the margin he'd made black check marks beside the points he found especially moving or insightful. These marks had been made long before he knew her, but she thought of them as secret notes to her. . . . Sometimes she wished he hadn't given her the book, it was so difficult. But that day when she talked to him for the first time, she was glad of the gift. Imagine just reaching into a bookcase, picking out a book, and giving it to an almost total stranger! It seemed a promise.

A Vietnam vet, recently through with drug rehabilitation, in "The Cat Who Fought the Rain," picks up a girl by offering her a ride just before a rain storm. He tells us:

> But I don't have to plan. Some girls get so nervous, wondering when you're going to move on them, that they'll jump the gun and start things off themselves. Just so they'll *know*. Betsy's one of those. All of a sudden, she's on my lap, trying to show me everything she's learned all at once.
>
> I slide down onto the floor, pull her down between my legs, and organize her some. "One thing at a time, Betsy Doyle." Then I kiss her, and dish it out to her real slow, the way I like it. And I make sure she likes it that way, too.

After a chance encounter at a laundromat in "Saturday Night in Pinedale, Wyoming," a man goes out to get a second pint of apricot brandy (the absolutely *right* drink for the story). We read:

> He sensed it coming on like a wild animal in the darkness near him, his skin prickling. It was under his ribs, at the back of his throat, in his groin, even in his hands. He gripped the wheel as hard as he could, groaning. Oh, god. He'd been without for so long he'd almost forgot, hoped he could forget. The need for a woman scared him, ate at his bones, his spine turning to water. He saw the way he was, a lonely, horny man, driving hell bent for leather towards a tiny coin laundry lit up ahead of him on the plains like a Christmas ornament: a fool in a hurry.

Janet Beeler Shaw writes about love, of men for women, women for men, women for children, fathers for sons—and she does so with equal sensitivity and intelligence no matter what point of view the story demands, the age of her characters, or if they are urban or rural. She writes about compulsive behavior. She writes about impulsive behavior. She writes about characters confronted with the agony of choice, and she writes about characters trapped by circumstances. It's doubtful there is anything she could not write about. Best of all, she writes stories.

There is a basic, primitive pleasure to reading a well-wrought story, the kind of wonder we might have felt when our parents sat at the foot of our beds and read to us, or our ancestors felt when they squatted around a fire and one of the tribe (who was honored!) chanted a tale. We read Janet Beeler Shaw's work to know what happens next. Only in retrospect do we realize the subtlety with which the story was told, the subliminal effects that worked on us because of the care with which language was selected. Only afterward do we recognize how exactly gestures illuminated character. Only with thought do we see how the design of the story distilled experience and gave the incoherence of life focus. This is art—accessible, meaningful, entertaining, and provocative. Be sure that one of the things you do not do is miss *Some of the Things I Did Not Do*. □